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## PREFACE

Journal of Indian History has completed sixty years of its eventful life in 1982. In the world of journalism, especially in scholastic journalism, where infant mortality is the rule and healthy survival a rare exception, the event of a Research Journal reaching the mature age of sixty is certainly a memorable one that deserves to be celebrated. Eventhough we are not in favour of ostentatious celebrations we have decided to commemorate this happy and unique occasion by bringing out a special issue of the Journal of Indian History attached to the regular sixtieth volume. This is devoted to historiographical studies on some of the major Indian historians who have passed away in recent years. We remember these seminal figures with feelings of reverence and gratitude for the important contributions they had made in the field of Indian History and culture. But we also note with dismay that no serious attempt has been made till now, of course, with a few brilliant exceptions, for an objective evaluation of their work. That is why we thought of associating their memories with the Diamond Jubilee Commemoration Volume of the Journal of Indian History. We have striven to give some rough uniformity of sorts in these studies in the matter of underscoring essential points like the life-sketch of the historians, survey of their intellectual accomplishments, historical methodology they followed, personal or other bias, if any, the assessment of the nature and content of their contributions.

However, we were not able to give adequate representation in this volume to all those who deserve to be honoured by including studies on them, due mainly to the lack of response on the part of some scholars who had been assigned the work. In any case we willingly bear the responsibility for the shortcoming and assure our readers that efforts will be made to publish articles on those who have been left out here in future issues of the Journal.

We express our deep sense of appreciation for the willing co-operation extended to us by the scholars, who have treated their subject of study in a masterly fashion. The editor is also deeply grateful to Dr. Tarasankar Banerjee, Professor of History in the Visva-Bharati University for the valuable suggestions he offered and to Dr. K. K. Kusuman, Lecturer in the Department of History, Kerala University, for the active editorial help he gave to him.

DR. T. K. RAVINDRAN







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## PART I



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## Aprada / Apradā : A Study in Its Connotation

BY

ADHIR CHAKRAVARTI

&

RANABIR CHAKRAVARTI

The discovery of and researches on five Damodarpur Copper plates dated in the 5th and 6th centuries A. D. have brought to light important aspects of agriculture, land system and agrarian life in general during the period stated above.<sup>1</sup> Purchase of a piece of land for the maintenance of religious performances and/or donation of purchased plot to priestly people are the main purports of these records.

As official documents of sale and gift these grants appear to have been prepared in a more or less similar style and phraseology. The term *aprada/apradā* figures in all five grants under review. The possible connotation of the term *aprada/apradā* occurs in five copper-plates:

- (a) Damodarpur CP of the time of Kumāragupta I GE 124<sup>2</sup>, 1.7. *Aparadāprahatakhilakṣetra*
- (b) Damodarpur CP of the time of Kumāragupta I GE 128<sup>3</sup>, 1.6 *Apradāḥkṣayanīvimaryādā*
- (c) Damodarpur CP of the time of Budhagupta GE 163,<sup>4</sup> 1.5 *Samudayavāhyapradāḥkṣetrāṇām*
- (d) Damodarpur CP of the time of Budhagupta (undated)<sup>5</sup> 1.7 & 1.11 *Apradā, Apradā kṣetra*
- (e) Damodarpur CP of the time... Gupta, GE 224<sup>6</sup> 1.18 *Apradādharmēṇa*

<sup>1</sup> R. G. Basak, "Five Damodarpur Copper Plates", *EI*, XV, pp. 130 f.

<sup>2</sup> D. C. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions bearing on Indian History and Civilization* Vol. I, (Calcutta, 1965) [hereafter S I], p. 292.

<sup>3</sup> *SI*, p. 293.

<sup>4</sup> *SI*, p. 333.

<sup>5</sup> *SI*, p. 337.

<sup>6</sup> *SI*, p. 349.



It will be evident that the term *aprada/apradā* is associated in three cases with *kṣetra* or land/plot; in two other instances the word *maryādā* and *dharma* i.e., custom and law is suffixed to it. Various expressions attached to *apradā* may be examined here. *Aprahata*<sup>7</sup> stands for a piece of uncultivated land; *khilakṣetra*<sup>8</sup> means a fallow/waste plot; the term *akṣayanīvi*<sup>9</sup> is usually taken to denote a perpetual endowment and the word *Samudayavāhya*<sup>10</sup> probably signifies a land bereft of accruing any yield, i.e., without income or revenue.

R. G. Basak who first edited these five copper plates gives the following translations / interpretations of the term *aprada/apradā*:

- (i) Damodarpur C.P., GE. 124 — “not (already) given (to any one)”<sup>11</sup>
- (ii) Damodarpur C.P., G.E. 128 — “according to the established rule (for disposing of land) destroying the condition of non-transferability.”<sup>12</sup>
- (iii) Damodarpur C.P., G.E. 163 — not already made into any gift (undisposed of)<sup>13</sup>
- (iv) Damodarpur C. P., (Gented) — Not translated. Here the word *apradā* seems to refer to land not given to anyone else before this transaction was effected.<sup>14</sup>
- (v) Damodarpur C.P., GE. 224 — Custom of *apradā*. It must be enjoyed to the custom of *apradā* which seems to refer to the fact that could not be transferred, but

7 *SI*, p. 292, note, 3.

8 *SI*, p. 348, note 2.

9 *SI*, p. 152, note, 10.

10 *SI*, p. 333, note, 4 or *Śūnyapratikara* in Gunaighar C. P. G. E. 188.

11 *EI*, XV, pp. 130-31.

12 *EI*, XV, p. 134. The reading of Sircar in this regard is correct, *SI*, p. 293.

13 *EI*, XV, p. 137.

14 *EI*, XV, p. 140. note 2.



## APRADA/APRADĀ : A STUDY IN ITS CONNOTATION 3

could only be enjoyed by the grantee perpetually.<sup>15</sup>

The same author, however, elsewhere<sup>16</sup> gives a somewhat different rendering of the term under review. It has been taken to mean unsettled,<sup>17</sup> non-settled<sup>18</sup> and inalienable endowment.<sup>19</sup> Basak, however, does not explain why and how the same word *aprada/apradā* should denote no less than three types of land i.e., undonated unsettled and inalienable plots.

According to D. C. Sircar, *apradā* stands for non-transferable property (or unsettled property).<sup>20</sup> He takes the term *apradā* as meaning 'gift' and therefore concludes that *apradā* should denote non-transferable, i.e., inalienable property.

The above renderings of term *aprada/apradā* are thus three in number: (i) not already made into a gift, (ii) not to be given away and (iii) unsettled or non-settled property. Neither Basak nor Sircar explains how and why the term under review is associated with habitation / settlement. If *apradā* denotes an inalienable or non-transferable property, it logically implies that the donee/grantee enjoys only qualified or restricted ownership of the plot. Ownership is manifested in the ability of the owner to dispose of his belongings at his own will and discretion, usually by gift, sale and mortgage. Judged from this light, the person/persons to whom *apradā* plot is sold could not make any further alienation of that land. This idea of a perpetual endowment finds particular favour with many scholars mainly because of the expression *apradākṣayanīvidharma*. *Akṣyanīvi* stands for perpetual endowment where the grantee is allowed to enjoy fruits of the endowment but not to spend the principal.<sup>21</sup> Some scholars took the next step to consider that the *dharma* or law concerning *apradā* and *akṣyanīvi* is something identical or at least closely similar. This may explain why both *apradādharma* and *akṣayanīvidharma* were taken by scholars to mean

<sup>15</sup> *EI*, XV, p. 144.

<sup>16</sup> R. G. Basak, "Land [Sale documents of Ancient Bengal," *Ashtosh Mukherjee Silver Jubilee Volume*, Vol. III, pt. 2, pp. 475-76 (Calcutta, 1925) [hereafter *AJV*]

<sup>17</sup> *AJV*, p. 480.

<sup>18</sup> *AJV*, p. 481.

<sup>19</sup> *AJV*, p. 482.

<sup>20</sup> *SI*, p. 292 note, 3.

<sup>21</sup> *EI*, XV,



the same thing, viz., custom of non-transferability and/or perpetual endowment.

B. C. Sen in his discussion on Damodarpur C. P. of 128 GE. observes that the land required by the applicant was of the class described as *apradā* to be given in accordance with *akṣayanivimaryādā*.<sup>22</sup> Though the term *apradā* is left here untranslated and uninterpreted, *apradā* and *akṣayanivi* are clearly viewed as separate and distinct concepts by him. On the basis of B. C. Sen's rendering of the term *dharmā* in Damodarpur C.P. GE 124, *apradā* denoted a plot "which had not been given to anybody before."<sup>23</sup>

The above discussion would show the term *apradā/apradā* has been translated and interpreted differently sometimes even by the same scholar — and it has occasionally been left untranslated. All these seem to point towards some confusion in scholars' mind regarding the actual connotation of this technical expression. Despite this confusion in the meaning of the term, several scholars seem to have unhesitatingly accepted views offered by earlier editors of Damodarpur records. Nihar Ranjan Ray suggests that *nīvidharma*, *akṣayanīvidharma* and *apradādharmā* had the same import and lay down certain conditions on further sale and gift of land by the donee. He, however, feels that a fine line of demarcation may be drawn between *aparādharmā* and *nīvidharma/akṣayanīvidharma*.<sup>24</sup> B. M. Morrison understands by *apradā* a land not given (before).<sup>25</sup> According to D. N. Jha "the grant of land according to the *aparādharmā* perhaps means that the donee has all the right to enjoy such property, but has no right to dispose of it."<sup>26</sup> He further equates *apradādharmā* with *nīvidharma* implying that the original endowment must not be diminished or destroyed, but must be preserved intact in perpetuity.<sup>26a</sup> S. K. Maity explains the term as *na-pradā*, i.e., "either that which cannot be alienated or which does not yield anything". But

22 B.S. Sen, *Some Historical Aspects of the Inscriptions of Bengal* (Calcutta. 1942) p. 506.

23 *Ibid.*

24 Nihar Ranjan Ray, *Bangalir Itihas*, Vol. I, (Third ed.), Calcutta, 1980, p. 229.

25 B. M. Morrison, *Political Centres and Cultural Regions in Early Bengal* (Jaipur, 1930) p. 85.

26 D. N. Jha, *Revenue System in Post-Maurya and Gupta Times* (Calcutta 1967), pp. 135-36.

26a *Ibid.*, p.136.



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he prefers the first meaning and also takes *apradādharmā* in the same sense as *nīvidharma*.<sup>27</sup> All the three scholars understand the term *apradā* in a more or less identical vein. But Maity describes *aprada* as a "fiscal term." This, to say the least, is completely wrong, and betrays lack of understanding of the content of records.

A simple observation may be offered here after the review of earlier works. A land which had not hitherto been made into a gift, should be expressed by the Sanskrit term *apradatta*. An inalienable plot should logically be denoted by the term *aprada/apradā*. *Aprada/Apradā* by the logic of grammar should mean something which does not yield or give (cf. *sukhaprada* — which gives pleasure; *phalaprada* — which bears fruit). From this point of view *aprada kṣetra* may be interpreted as a plot of land which does not give or yield, i.e., which does not produce any crop and therefore has no revenue-yielding potentials. This may sound logical since such *kṣetras* are also described as *aprahata* (uncultivated), *khilakṣetra* (fallow) and *samudayavāhya* (without any income). Such a plot of uncultivated, fallow land without any economic return would naturally fall into *aprada* or unproductive category of land. The expression *apradādharmā* should therefore mean the law (*dharma*) relating to unproductive / unyielded lands (*aprada*). *Apradākṣayanīvidharma* seems to denote the custom relating to an unyielding land made into a perpetual endowment.

In the revised edition<sup>28</sup> of the *Corpus of Gupta Inscription*, of D. R. Bhandarkar, it is significant to note that he translates the term *aprada* in the first four Damodarpur C.P.s as unyielding type of land.<sup>29</sup> He, however, in the English rendering of the expression *apradādharmenā* in Damodarpur C.P. of GE. 224 says that the endowment was made according to the law of "irrevocable grant."<sup>29a</sup> Here he obviously falls back on the interpretation of earlier scholars and equates it with the *akṣayanīvidharma*. No reason has, however, been cited by the author as to why

27 S. K. Maity, *Economic Life in Northern India in the Gupta Period* (Delhi, 1970) p. 41.

28 J. Fleet, *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, Vol. III, revised by D. R. Bhandakbar, et.al (New Delhi, 1981), (hereafter *CII*, the latest edition is always meant unless specified differently).

29 *C II*, Vol. III, p. 286, p. 288, p. 338 and p. 345.

29a *G II*, Vol. III, p. 363.



he took *aprada* in a sense different from that of four earlier records. The grant itself also does not appear to suggest any other sense of *aprada* than that in other four Damodarpur grants. We may therefore, translate it as the custom connected with or relating to unyielding variety of lands.

The expression, custom relating to unyielding lands, requires some clarification. The five Damodarpur C.P.s are all sale deeds of fallow plots. The price of a fallow, uncultivated (and therefore, unyielding) piece of tract is uniformly recorded as three *dinars* per *Kulyavāpa* in these grants. On the other hand three plates of Dharmāditya and Gopacandra, coming from Faridpur, speak of a higher rate, four *dinārs* per *Kulyavāpa* (*Caturdinārikya Kulyavāpa*).<sup>30</sup> All lands transacted there are called *Kṣetra*<sup>31</sup> (once as *Vāpakṣetra*)<sup>31a</sup> meaning cultivated plots. The price for cultivated plots would be naturally higher than uncultivated barren land. The customary law therefore seems to fix a lower price for uncultivated and unyielding fallow lands.

The Damodarpur C.P. of G.E. 224 here provides another interesting information. The application for the purchase of a plot of fallow unyielding land was duly ascertained by record keepers. They gave approval to this appeal because there was no possibility of a loss of interest for the district authority (*nātra viṣayapatinām Raścivirodhaḥ*)<sup>32</sup> The nature of this *virodhaḥ* is more explicitly stated in an earlier grant, the Nandapur C.P. of G. E. 169. There too an application for the purchase of an uncultivated, non-revenue yielding land was ascertained by record keepers. It was duly upheld by them, because by such sale of a plot without revenue bearing potentials *the king would not incur any financial loss* (*evamvidhotpratikara khilakṣetra vikraye ca na kaścīdrājārttha virodhaḥ*)<sup>33</sup> (Italics ours). We have already said that an uncultivated plot would naturally be unproductive (*aprada*) and without revenue yielding potential (*utpratikara/apratikara/samudaya vāhya* etc.) Such expressions regarding the consideration of 'no financial loss' for the king never occurs in records dealing with transactions in cultivated/

30 *SI*, pp. 364-65, OU. 9-10.

p. 368, U 13-14, p. 3, 71, 1. 16.

31a *SI*, p. 365, 1. 11.

32 *SI*, pp. 348-49, U. 11-12.

33 *SI* p. 383, 1. 10.



# APRADA/APRADĀ : A STUDY IN ITS CONNOTATION 7

cultivable tracts of land. It appears that the expressions law of unyielding lands' (*apradādharma*) may denote the custom or practice by which a plot of fallow land would be sold out at a low price, since such transaction did not result in any financial loss to the royal treasury.<sup>34</sup>

The term *aprada/apradā*, we have already stated, may stand for a plot without yielding any revenue. Land of uncultivated, fallow and unyielding category was sold to intending purchasers who, in their turn donated it to a priest of religious establishment for the upkeep and furtherance of religious activities of the donee. Its logical implication would be that lands so far remaining fallow and uncultivated would be turned into productive plots; otherwise how these could sustain religious performances of donees? The nature of five Damodarpur records indicates that these plots were alienated to donees as revenue-free lands. So, even after these were made fit for production of crops, nothing accrued to the exchequer in terms of revenue. From the point of view of government receipt, such plots would logically come under the category of *aprada*.

The arguments placed above therefore may lead to the conclusion that *aprada/apradā* is essentially a technical expression to denote a particular type of land, the term *apradādharma* seems to stand for the custom of transaction of such *aprada* lands. It does not imply a condition on further sale or gift (i.e., condition on ownership) by the owner.

34 Theoretical treatises of early India usually recognize king's special rights over fallow / waste lands. (U. N. Ghoshal, *Agrarian System in Ancient India* (Calcutta, 1972) p. 121. The *aprada* land, mentioned in Damodarpur grants seems to have been owned by the king. That is why, application for purchase of such a plot had to be placed to the administrative authority and payment of money after the purchase of land had to be made to the same authority.

The *aprada* land being unproductive and uncultivated was some sort of an economic burden on the royal administration. The king by selling out such plots even at a cheaper rate could dispose of unproductive plots to private individuals and at the same time was ensured of some cash out of the self-proceed. This may explain why the *pustapālas* commented that there was no financial loss of the king by selling a fallow, non-revenue yielding tract.







## Śaivism in Kōṅgoda Under the Śailodbhavas (c. A. D. 600-750)

BY

A. K. RATH

The Śailodbhavas ruled over Kōṅgoda comprising the modern Puri and Ganjam districts of Orissa from c. A. D. 600 to 750. They were ardent Śaivites whose inscriptions<sup>1</sup> commenced with the invocation of Śiva as the highest God. Under their patronage Śaivism received a powerful impetus and became the dominating religion and the strongest Hindu sectarian movement in Kōṅgoda.

That the Śailodbhavas had their origin from the grace of God Śiva is known from a legend recorded in their inscriptions. The legend says that once there was anarchy and disorder in Kalinga when Pulindasena was ruling from the Mahendra region. Although clad with numberless excellences Pulindasena did not covet sovereignty for himself. Rejecting the royal insignia he worshipped the eternal being to make a capable ruler who could restore law and order in the land. Consequently the self-born *Svayambhu* (Śiva) gave him a boon which he so earnestly desired. Śiva was pleased to create out of a rock, a *Devakumāra*, who was made king by Pulindasena under the name Śailodbhava, whose dynasty also went after his name.<sup>2</sup> This divine origin of the dynasty from the grace of Śiva made the Śailodbhavas staunch Śaivites and enabled them to win the loyal support of the people. Śaivism thus played a significant role in the formation and stabilization of the power of the Śailodbhavas. It had also exercised a profound influence on the life and culture of Kōṅgoda. The inscriptions of the Śailodbhavas and the

1 S. N. Rajguru, *Inscriptions of Orissa* (I.O.), Vol. I, Part II, pp. 157 ff.

2 G. Keilhorn, "The Buguḍā Plates of Mādhavarman" (Verse 55), *E.I.*, Vol. III, pp. 45-50; The Bāṅapur Plates of Madhyamaraja I, *J.K.H.R.S.*, Vol. II, Part I, pp. 50-65 ff. (ed.) S. N. Rajguru; The Cuttack Museum Charter of Mādhavarman, *E.I.*, Vol. XXIV, pp. 148-53 (ed.), N. G. Majumdar; *O.H.R.J.*, Vol. II, Nos. 3 & 4, pp. 51 ff.



temples of their times throw ample light on their patronage of Śaivism and on the activities of the Śaiva ascetics in Koṅgoda.

The Śailodbhavas had assumed the title of *Parama-Māheśvara*. Śrī Charamparāja alias Ayośobhita I (c. A.D. 590-610) in his Khaṇḍi-padā Nuāpalli copper plates<sup>3</sup> reverently eulogises *Trilochana Śiva* "whose head is decorated with the flowers like *Kamala* (lotus) and *Kumuda* (lily), whose matted hair is decorated with the shining jems of the serpent tied on it which appears like the sun and moon. Let *Trilochana*, who is the *Lokeśvara* (Lord of the Universe) and from whom the great prowess is achieved grant perpetual prosperity," It is further said that "Charamparāja, a devout worshipper of Maheśvara (*Parama-Maheśvara*), bows at the feet of Hara (Śiva), which is capable of banishing the sins acquired through accumulation of several lives by rebirth and which is worshipped by the *Suras*, *Asuras*, *Kinnaras*, *Gandharvas* and the *Mahoragas*, whose (Hara's) cheeks (*Kapola*) is warmed by the great flame arising from the eyes of *Girijā* (*Pārvatī*) and cooled by dripping waters of *Ganga* and by whose (dance) while spreading the arms holding *Triśula* on all sides (for *Tāṇḍava*) the wind blows so swiftly that the whole world shakes as if deluge would occur by fall of the earth below".<sup>4</sup> This inscription reveals that Charamparāja attributed every bit of his success and prosperity to the grace of Śiva.

Mādhavarāja II alias Mādhavarman (c. A. D. 610-665) in his Gañjām Copper Plates<sup>5</sup> (619-20 A.D.) has declared that he was devoted to the feet of the blessed Lord of the three worlds (*Tribhubanaguroh*), who was the cause of the creation, existence and destruction, whose arms were placed on the hump of the great bull (*Nandi*) as on the pillow of a couch and whose matted hair was illuminated in one place by the crescent of the moon. In his Khurdhā Plates<sup>6</sup> he is also said to have been a devout worshipper of Lord Maheśvara's feet — *Maheśvara Charaṇa Jugalaika Saranyaḥ*". Hitherto the feet of Śiva was worshipped. But from hence forward began the worship of the matted hair or *Jata* of Śiva. Thus the Buguḍā<sup>7</sup> and the Purushottampur<sup>8</sup> Copper

3 S. N. Rajguru, *I.O.*, Vol. II, pp. 323-329, lines 1-14. This is the earliest inscription where we find the name Koṅgoda in line 4.

4 *Ibid.*, Lines 4-14 of the plates.

5 *E.I.*, Vol. VI, pp. 143-6 ff; *I.O.*, Vol. I. Part II, pp. 157-161.

6 *J.A.S.B.*, Vol. LXXIII (1904), Part I, pp. 282-86 ff.

7 *E.I.*, Vol. III, pp. 41-50 and Vol. VII, pp. 100-102.

8 *O.H.R.J.*, Vol. II, Nos. 3 & 4, pp. 20 ff., lines 1-3.



## ŚAIVISM IN KONGODA UNDER THE ŚAILODBHAVAS 11

Plates of Mādhavarāja II open with the verse in praise of the matted hair of Śiva as follows:

“*Indordhauta Mrunāla Tantubhiriba Slistah Karaiḥ Komalirbadha Herarunaih Sphurat Phanamanerdigdha Prabhasomsubhih I Parbatyah Sakacha Grahavyatikara Vyavritta Bandha Slatha Gaṅgāmbha Plutibhinna Bhasma Kanikāh Sambhorjattāḥ Pāntubah II*” (Verse I).

From Mādhavarāja II onwards this *Maṅgalācharaṇa* verse is repeated in all the grants<sup>9</sup> of the Sailodbhavas which allude to the union of Śiva and Pārvatī while invoking the mercy of the former's *Jaḷā* or matted locks of hair on which the particles of ashes are separated by the overflowing waters of the Gaṅgā, which are touched by the soft white rays of the moon, of which the lusture is daubed by the red rays of the sparkling gems on the hoods of the entwining snakes and which are slackened because of their knots being set aside on account of the grasp of Pārvatī embracing Śiva.

Besides, the verse No. 2 of the Buguḍā and the Purushottampur plates are also repeated in the Bāṇapur<sup>10</sup> and the Pārikud<sup>11</sup> plates of Madhyamarāja I (c. A.D. 665–695) and the Nivina<sup>12</sup> plates of Dharmarāja II (c. A.D. 695–730) praise *Nilakanṭha* (Śiva) as greater than sky superior to the lord of the immortal divine being (Indra), establisher of Dharma in the *Yajña* performed by *Dakṣha*, winner of many powerful *Rākshaṣas*, deeper than the fathomless ocean, brighter and more luminous than the sun, more pleasant looking than the moon and as the ruler of the three worlds. These invocatory verses are a proof at once to the Sailodbhavas being devoted Śaivas.

The Bāṇapur and the Pārikud plates of Madhyamarāja I also reveal how the hermits of Kongoda performed meditation in several ways, viz., by following the functions of the wild deers having been lived with them, by looking attentively at the thousand hot rays of the burning sun which caused mutilation of their faces, by wearing natural clothes, viz., *Balkala* and *Ajina* with matted locks of hair. For attainment of divine peace they left their abodes and practised penance in

9 *I.O.*, Vol. I, Part II, 178–240.

10 *J.K.H.R.S.*, Vol. II, Part I, pp. 59–65; *I.O.*, Vol. I, Part II, pp. 191–92.

11 *E.I.*, Vol. XI, pp. 281–87 ff.

12 *E.I.*, Vol. XXI, pp. 34–41 ff.



caves. Some of them inhaled smoke, others lived by taking air, fruits and water, while some others observed fasting— "*Kechid Banyamrugena Sārddhamareṃ Stātā Sthitirilayā Kechid Dugdhamukhā Sahasra Kiraṇa Jwālāvalī Premkhiṇāḥ* I

*Kechid Balkalinastasthājīnadhrah Kechi Jatārdhairaḥ Nānārūpa Dharāstapanti Munayo Divyāspadākāmkiṇāḥ* II  
*Kechichchaila Guhodareshu Niyatā Dhūmāvalipāyinaḥ Anye Vāyuphalāmbubhakshya Niratāḥ Kechinnirāhārakāḥ* I"<sup>13</sup>

Some of these hermits might be Śaiva ascetics who were performing penance in the caves of Kṛṣṇagiri in south-west Koṅgoda, at the foot of which a number of Śaiva temples and *Liṅgas* of the 7th and 8th centuries A.D. are found. These austere Śaiva ascetics were held in high esteem in the society who might have inculcated in the aborigines of hinterland Koṅgoda a spirit of devotion to Śaivism and a sense of loyalty to the established order upheld by the Śaivite Śailodbhavas.

The Śailodbhavas like the Eastern Gaṅgas paid homage to Gokarṇeśvara of Mahendragiri which was originally worshipped by them. Mahendragiri, a famous centre of Śaivism on the southern boundary of Koṅgoda, was regarded as *Bṛihat Kulagiri* in the Śailodbhava inscriptions.<sup>14</sup>

We come across some Purāṇic stories relating to Śiva recorded in the Śailodbhava inscriptions. The lines quoted below from the Gañjām plates of Mādhavarāja II reveal the picture of Bhāgiratha's bringing Gaṅga from heaven (*Sura Sarita*) and her descent over the Himalayas, where it is converted into *Martya Gaṅgā* and *Pātāla Gaṅgā* — "*Bhāgīrathābhatāritāyā Himabadgīrerupatanādaneka Silā Sambhātā Bivinna Bahispātālāntarjalaudhaya Surasarita Iba...*"<sup>15</sup>

It is interesting to note that some of the Brāhmin donees mentioned in the Śailodbhava grants bear Śaivite names, eg., Rudra Svāmin<sup>16</sup> Śiva Svāmin,<sup>17</sup> Trilochana Svāmin<sup>18</sup> which indicate the existence of the

13 *I.O.*, Vol. I, Part II, p. 197; *J.K.H.R.S.*, Vol. II, Part I, pp. 59-65, lines 31-35.

14 A. K. Rath, "A note on Mahendragiri", "*Orissa History Congress, Proceedings of the Annual Session*, (1978), p. 3.

15 *E.I.*, Vol. VI, pp. 143-46 ff, lines 4-6 of the plates.

16 Orissa Museum plates of Mādhavarāman, *I.O.*, Vol. I, Part II, lines 30-31, p. 185.

17 Pārikud Plates of Madhyamarāja I, *I.O.*, Vol. I, Part II, p. 203, line 48.

18 Raṇapur Plates of Dharmarāja, *I.O.*, Vol. I, Part II, p. 221, line 49.



# ŚAIVISM IN KOṄGODA UNDER THE ŚAILODBHAVAS 13

Śaivite tradition in Koṅgoda. These Śaivite donees might have exercised a profound influence on the people of the donated villages to incline more and more towards Śaivism.

During the Śailodbhava rule a number of Śaiva temples were built in Koṅgoda at Bhubaneśwar, Prachi Valley, Bānapur, Kṛṣṇagiri, Hummā, Rishikulyā Valley and Bargām which serve as documents of Śaivite culture in Koṅgoda. This is also corroborated by the accounts of Hiuen T'sang who had visited Koṅgoda (Kung-Yu-T'o) in c. 638 A.D. and observed that in Koṅgoda there were more than 100 *Deva* temples.<sup>19</sup> Most of these temples were obviously Śaiva shrines.

In Koṅgoda the worship of Śiva in the form of *Liṅga* was popular and the *Pāśupata* sect of Śaivism founded by *Lakuliṣa* held ground. This is revealed by the representation of the *Lakuliṣa* images in the temples of Śatrughneśvara, Bharateśvara, Paraśurāmeśvara, Svarṇajāleśvara and Kapileśvara at Bhubaneśwar which form the earliest groups of the Śaiva temples in Orissa.<sup>20</sup> These temples, built under the patronage of the Śailodbhavas, bear close resemblance with the ruined Śaiva temple at Puñjyāmā near Bānapur where the capital of the Śailodbhavas was located.<sup>21</sup>

These temples not only teem with the representation of *Lakuliṣa*, the deified Teacher and the founder of the *pāśupata* sect<sup>22</sup> but also the reliefs depicting Puranic stories relating to Śiva and the several incidents of his life. The front *Rāhā* of the Śatrughneśvara temple is decorated with two *Chaitya* windows containing the *Rāvāṇānugrahamurti* and *Nātārāja*, crowned by a *Kirtimukha*, above which is a seated *Lakuliṣa*. The marriage procession of Śiva is depicted in the northern side. The two outermost panels on the lintel represent Śiva both in his phallic and anthropomorphic form.<sup>23</sup>

The Paraśurāmeśvara temple is by far the most decorative of all the early Śaiva temples. Percy Brown has rightly observed that "every

19 T. Watters, *On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India*, Vol. II, pp. 193, 196 and 198.

20 K. C. Panigrahi, *Archaeological Remains at Bhubaneśwar*, pp. 27 & 229.

21 *O.H.R.J.*, Vol. XIII (1965), No. 1, p. 33.

22 *E.I.*, Vol. XXI, pp. 1 ff; *I.H.C.*, *Proceedings of the 13th Session*, pp. 115-123 (1950) and 14th Session (1951), pp. 32-36; R. G. Bhandarkar *Vaiṣṇavism Śaivism and other Minor Sects*, p. 116.

23 D. Mitra, Bhubaneśwar, (Department of Archaeology, India), pp. 28-29; *O.H.R.J.*, Vol. X, No. 4, pp. 59.61, (1962).



stone here is of informative character.”<sup>24</sup> On the southern entrance of the *Jagamohana* of this temple there is an inscription<sup>25</sup> which records that Srimad Pramadāchārya (Prapannāchārya) donated two *Adhaks* of rice<sup>26</sup> to lord Parasasvara or Paraśaresvara which was to be subsequently, distributed among the *Tapasvins*. Scholars like Dr. A. Ghosh<sup>27</sup> and Dr. R. C. Panigrahi<sup>28</sup> have stated that Paraśurāmeśvara temple was originally known as Parasasvara after the *Pāśupata* teacher Parasara mentioned in the Mathurā Pillar Inscription of Chandragupta II as a successor of Kushika, one of the four disciples of *Lakuliśa*.<sup>29</sup> Pramadāchārya or Prapannāchārya might be a *Siddhapurusha* or an *Ācharya* of the *Lakuliśa-Pāśupata* sect.<sup>30</sup>

The reliefs of the Paraśurāmeśvara temple are narrative in character forming a repertoire of Śaiva myths. The front *Rāhā* represents Śiva as *Rāvaṇānugrahamurti* (in the role of curbing the pride of Rāvaṇa) and a seated *Lakuliśa* holding a *Lakuta* (club) in meditative pose (*Yogāsana*) showing *Dharma Pravarttana Mudrā*. The lowest *Chaitya* window of the southern delineates the *Bhikshāṭana Murti* of Śiva, where the God is seen begging food of his consort. The *Chaitya* on the eastern side contains *Lakuliśa* with his four disciples, Kushika, Garga, Mitra and Kaurushya,<sup>31</sup> each with a *Pushtaka* held in the left hand and the right showing *Abhaya Mudrā*. They are all seated on lotuses with stalks rising from a common lotus forming the pedestal of the central figure *Lakuliśa* who holds as usual a *Lakuta* and shows *Dharmappravarttana Mudrā*. The lintel above the eastern niche depicts the marriage of Śiva and Pārvati. On the northern wall of the *Jagamohana* there is another *Lakuliśa*. In one of the shallow rectangular niches we find the figure of a four armed Śiva in sitting pose wearing a snake *Kuṇḍala* holding a long trident in the upper left hand and an *akshamālā* and a lotus bud in the right ones.<sup>32</sup> It is an anthropomorphic image of

24 *Indian Architecture, Buddhist and Hindu* (First Edition) p. 120.

25 A. Ghosh, *E.I.*, Vol. XVI, pp. 126 ff. S. N. Das reads Prapannāchārya, Vide *O.H.R.J.*, Vol. II, Nos. 3 & 4, pp. 46-50.

26 *Adhak* of *Aṇā* is still in use as a measure in South Orissa and it is equivalent to  $\frac{3}{4}$  K. G.

27 *E.I.*, Vol. XXVI, pp. 126 ff.

28 K. C. Panigrahi, *op. cit.*, pp. 225.

29 *E.I.*, Vol. XXI, pp. 5-6.

30 *O.H.R.J.*, Vol. II, Nos. 3 & 4, pp. 45-46; K. C. Panigrahi, *op. cit.*, p. 228.

31 *J.B.B.R.A.S.*, Vol. XXII, pp. 154 ff; The *Cintra Prasasti* of the *Chālukya* ruler Sāratāgadeva, *E.I.*, Vol. I, pp. 271 ff.

32 K. C. Panigrahi, *op. cit.*, p. 27.



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Siva. The stories of Śiva's drinking of poison churned out of the ocean has been depicted in a medallion on the southern wall of the sanctum just above the central niche. Here Śiva is found standing in an inclined pose with an umbrella in the left hand. His right hand with a cup is stretched out and *Bhudevi* is pouring poison into it out of another pot.<sup>33</sup>

In the Bharateśvara and Svarṇajāleśvara temples also we find the images of *Lakuliśa*. On the lintel of the northern niche of the Svarṇajāleśvara temple there are scenes of Śiva's marriage and worship of *Liṅga*. The origin of the Kapileśvara temple, a contemporary of the Paraśurāmeśvara temple, has been traced to the *Pāśupata* sect. It is said to have been named after Kapila, one of the successors of Kushika, a disciple of *Lakuliśa*.<sup>34</sup> It was an established custom of the *Pāśupata* sect to name the shrines after the names of its dead teachers.<sup>35</sup>

The other Śaiva temples of Koṇgoda, viz., the Puñjijāmā at Bānapur, the Jhādeśvara, Mukteśvara and Mallikeśvara at Kṛṣṇagiri,<sup>36</sup> the Svapneśvara, Nilakantheśvara and Sovaneśvara at Aḍaspur of the Prācī Valley, the Bateśvara at Hummā, the Akhaṇḍeśvara near Gañjām and the five Śaiva temples at Bargām<sup>37</sup> bear close resemblance to the Paraśurāmeśvara group of temples and point to the effulgence of Śaivite culture in Koṇgoda. The *Umā-Maheśvara* image of the Mukteśvara temple at Kṛṣṇagiri has a striking resemblance with the *Uma-Maheśvara* of the Paraśurāmeśvara temple.<sup>38</sup> *Lakuliśa* images are also found at Kṛṣṇagiri.

The appearance of *Lakuliśa* images in the temples and the meaning of shrines of our period after the dead Pāśupata teachers indicate the influence of the *Lakuliśa-Pāśupata* sect of Śaivism in Koṇgoda. Āchārya Haribhadra in his *Sadadarsana Samuccaya* has stated that the *Lakuliśa-Pāśupatas* "worshipped that form of the Almighty contemplated by the ancient sages where there is neither the

33 I.H.C., *Proceedings of the 18th Session*, p. 118 (Calcutta, 1955).

34 K. C. Panigrahi, *op.cit.*, p. 225.

35 D. R. Bhandarkar, *E.I.*, Vol. XXI, p. 5.

36 A.K. Rath, "A note on Kṛṣṇagiri and its Archaeological Remains", *Orissa History Congress, Proceedings of the Annual Session*, 1979, Bhubaneśwar, p. 15.

37 Vidya Dahejia, *Early Stone Temples of Orissa*, pp. 120 and 385.

38 Dr. N. K. Sahu, *Oriyā Jātira Itihāsa* (Oriyā), Part I, p. 367.



celestial river, cobra, the garland of skulls, the digits of moon, Pārvatī, matted hair and besmearing of ashes nor anything else. He, God Śiva, alone is to be resorted to by the ascetics. Those who are covetous of pleasure of a kingdom meditate upon and worship him.”<sup>39</sup> However, the Śailodbhavas as known from the preamble of their charters<sup>40</sup> meditated upon these symbols which the followers of the *Mattamayura* sect<sup>41</sup> worshipped. The *Mattamayura* sect seems to have gained ground in Kālīṅga in the 7<sup>th</sup> century A. D. In this regard the Dharmalingeśvara copper plate inscription<sup>42</sup> of G.E. 184 (682 A. D.) of the Eastern Ganga king Devendravarman may be cited which reveals that a great scholar named Patanga Sivāchārya of the *Mattamayura* sect was the *Dikṣhāguru* of Devendravarman. He was living with his disciple in the *Yāgeśvara Bhaṭṭāraka* temple near Gurāṇḍi in the Mahendra region. Patanga Sivāchārya might have influenced the Śailodbhavas and popularised his sect in Koṅgoda which was in the immediate neighbourhood of Kālīṅga.

Thus the inscriptions of the Śailodbhavas, the temples and the sculptures of their times reveal that Śaivism was a deep rooted religion in Koṅgoda where the *Lakuliṣa-Pāśupata* and the *Mattamayura* sects flourished simultaneously.

39 Gaekwad Oriental Series, XXV (Appendix II, p. 29 and Appendix III, p. 35; *J.H.C., Proceedings of the 13th Session*, p. 118, (Nagpur, 1950).

40 *E.I.*, Vol. III, pp. 41-50 and Vol. VII, pp. 100-102; *O.H.R.J.*, Vol II, Nos. 3 & 4, pp. 20 ff; *I.O.*, Vol. I, Part II, pp. 178-240.

41 *J.B.R.S.*, Vol. XXXIX, p. 6; *E.I.*, Vol. XXI, pp. 148 ff; (Chandrahe Inscription), *I.H.Q.*, Vol. XXVI, No. I, p. 16; *C.I.I.*, Vol. IV, p. 204 f; *E.I.*, Vol. I, pp. 351-56 (Ranoḍ Inscription).

42 *J.A.H.R.S.*, Vol. II, pp. 275-76, ff; *E.I.*, Vol. XXVI, pp. 62-65 ff.; *I.O.*, Vol. II, pp. 370-371.



## Royal Contribution and Patronage to Indian Music

BY

GOWRI KUPPUSWAMY & M. HARIHARAN

Indian music, in its classical forms, is one of the most ancient types still surviving. It has, of course, inevitably altered over the years; nevertheless its basic elements would appear to be much as they were over two thousand years ago.

The enlightened kings of India have nurtured our music with tender care and have been its willing captives. In fact, musical training formed an indispensable item of royal education. Many were the rulers of India who were profound scholars in the theory and practice of this art. Several of them have perpetuated their names by bequeathing an imperishable legacy of scholarly musical treatises to posterity. Also, nowhere else in the world has royal patronage and encouragement to music probably been as continuous and rich as in India.

Around 2000 B. C. the Aryans came to the subcontinent and with their arrival, India entered the Vedic period of her history. The sacred scriptures consisted of the four Vedas viz., the R̥g, Yajur, Sāma and Atharva. These, together with the two epics, the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata and various Purāṇas, had a close connection with music for the verses were chanted in set musical patterns. The Rāmāyaṇa throws considerable light on the musical culture of the age and abounds in references to music and dancing. The Mahābhārata too contains references to students of music, teachers of music, professional musicians, instrumentalists, etc.

Authentic chronicled history of India begins with the rule of the Mauryan dynasty in the north and of the Cēras, Pāṇḍyas and Cōlas in the south. There is no denying the fact that royal interest in literature and the fine arts including music was evident even at the time of the Mauryas (325-188 B.C.) and continued during the reign of the Sunga dynasty (188-76 B.C.) and the Kanva dynasty (76-31 B.C.). However, sustained encouragement and patronage to music can be said



to have commenced only with the rulers of the Gupta dynasty. Chandragupta I (320–330 A.D.) and Chandragupta II (375–413 A.D.) deserve particular mention in this context. The latter was better known as Vikramāditya and it was in his court that renowned poets like Kālidāsa and Aśvaghoṣha flourished.

The Pallava rulers of Kāñci, Mahēndravarmān I and Narasimhavarman (7th century) were also great patrons of music and other fine arts. The first Royal patron to have himself made a significant contribution to the science of music is Mahēndravarmān I, the engraver of the Kudimiyāmalai and Tirumāyāyāy inscriptions (near Pudukkōṭṭai) which enshrined many new ideas for the later musicians and musicologists. Mahēndravarmān, in fact, laid the foundation for the development of notation in Indian music with different varieties of notes and *rāga* formulations.

In the far north, a little later, Damodara Gupta wrote Kuttanīmata under the patronage of the Kārkōtaka King Jayapīḍa Vinayāditya of Kashmir. This treatise reveals that by the 8th century vocal music had attained a status comparable with instrumental music.

Many Cōḷa kings whose reign extended over the 11th and 12th centuries encouraged and nurtured musicians and other artistes in diverse ways including munificent gift of lands (in some cases even whole villages) as evident from numerous inscriptions and edicts ascribed to this period. Special mention needs to be made in this context of Rājārāja I, (985–1018 A.D.), Rājēndra I (1012–1044 A.D.), Rājādhi Rāja I (1044–1054 A.D.), Rājēndra II (1052–1064 A.D.), Rājēndra III (1070–1122 A.D.) and Rājārāja III (1146–1173 A.D.).

Contemporaneous with the later Cōḷas were a number of royal scholars in different parts of India who distinguished themselves in diverse fields of music. The Chālukyan king Sōmēśvara II wrote the encyclopaedic work *Mānasōllasa* or Abilashitarthachintāmaṇi (1100 A.D.) which deals in detail with all the subjects known in his time; its section on music highlights for the first time the importance of *rāgas* and their classification. *Sarasvatī Hridayālankāra* (1100 A. D.) of Nāyadēva, the ruler of Mithila lists 160 *rāgas* including some dēśī *rāgas* while *saṅgita Sudhākara* (1170 A.D.) of the Gujarathi king Haripāla Dēva, abounds in references to tāla, gīta and gītaprabhandas. Other noteworthy kings of this period who enriched our musical heritage with their monumental treatises are Nāyadēva's illustrious brother Kīrtirāja of Kāśī (Commentary on Nāṭya-Sāstra, 1100 A.D.); Pratāpa Chakravartī



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Jagadēkamalla II (Sāṅgīta Chūḍāmaṇi 1140 A.D.) and Gouranarya (Sāṅgīta Lakṣhaṇadīpika). Lōchana Kavi, the author of the well known work *Rāgatarāṅgiṇi* (1160 A.D.) was the court poet of the Rāshtrakūta monarch Kīrtirāja of Kāsi. The most noteworthy poet of this period who enjoyed royal patronage was Jayādeva, the author of the famous *Gītagōvinda*, who flourished in the court of king Lakshmanasena of Bengal. The *Gītagōvinda* heralded the introduction of Sanskrit verses in music. In fact it is the first known musical opera or dance drama written in Sanskrit. It also set the pattern for the treatment of themes like erotic love and mundane and profane love in Indian musical texts and songs. The fact that more than 150 poets have attempted at various periods to initiate this epic in different languages throughout the length and breadth of the country bears testimony to its greatness and popularity.

During the 13th century, Somarājadēva, the feudatory under Ajayapāla (Sāṅgīta Ratnāvali, 1200 A.D.) the Kākatīya King Gaṇapati Dēva (Gītaratnāvali, 1220 A.D.) and king Sēnāpati (Nṛityaratnāvali) contributed in no small measure towards enriching our musical repertory. In the north, king Hammira of Mewar (a forefather of Rāṇa Kumbha) wrote the treatise entitled *Sāṅgīta Srīṅgārahara* (1283 A.D.) which enumerated more than 50 *alaṅkāras* and varieties in music beginning from Sāmaveda. While Singabhūpāla (Lasyaranjana, 1220 A.D.) flourished in Vīra Ballāla II's court, Nisanka Sāraṅgadēva wrote his *magnum opus* Sāṅgīta Ratnākara (1230 A.D.) under the patronage of the Yādava king Singhana. This veritable ocean of music is the pioneering work to discuss almost all aspects of Indian music including the *lakṣhanas* of various contemporary *prabhandhas* and *gītas*. The fact that Sāṅgītaratnākara is the one musical treatise on which the largest number of commentaries have been written by illustrious scholars over several centuries is a measure of its greatness. The closing years of the 13th century saw the beginnings of Muslim influence on Indian Music. The pioneer among the royal Muslim patrons of India was Allāudin Khilji (1296-1316 A.D.) The renowned musicologist Amīr Khusru flourished during his reign while Gōpāla Nāyaka was his court musician.

Passing on to the 14th century, Ballāla III (Bhāratasāra Saṅgraha, 1310 A.D.), Sudhākalasa (Sāṅgītōpanishadsārōddhara, 1320 A.D.), Bhuvanānanda (Sāṅgitalōka 1350 A.D.) and Kumāragiri Reddi (Vasantharājīyam, 1350 A.D.) were some of the royal scholar poets who made valuable contributions to our musical culture and heritage. The great



Vidyāranya, who inspired the Vijayanagar Empire into being, is reported to have written a work on music known as *Sangītasāra* (1340 A.D.) for which no authentic manuscript is yet available. One has to gather the contents of this work from references and quotations available from other musical treatises like *Sangīta Sudhā* of Ragunātha Nāyaka, *Bharatasārasangraha* of Chikkabhūpāla, etc. Vidyāranya seems to have described in this work more than 15 *mēlās* and 50 *rāgās* prevalent during his time. Simhabhūpāla king of Mithila wrote *Sangītasudhākara*, a critical commentary on Sārangadēva's *Sangītaratnākara*. Simhabhūpāla's genealogy begins with Harisimhadēva, the patron of Jyōtīrīsvara whose work, *Varnaratnākara*, contains references to various types of musical forms existing in Mithila during his time. Palkuruki Sōmanatha (Basavapurāna and Pandithānādhyā Charita, 1300 A.D.) received royal encouragement from the Reddi kings of Andhra Pradesh.

During the 15th century, Pedda Kōmati Reddi (commentary on *Vasantharajiyam*, 1400 A.D.), Vembhupala (*Sangita Chintamani*, 1402 A.D.), the ruler of Kada who was the feudatory under Husain Shah Sharqi (*Sangita Siromani*, 1499 A.D.) and Sikandar Lodi (1488–1506 A.D.), the author of the first work on Indian music in the Persian language (*Labjat-e-Sikandar Shahi*) were the royal stalwarts who distinguished themselves as the harbingers of our musical renaissance. Rāṇa Kumbha of Mewar (1433–1468 A.D.) has more than 10 musical works to his credit including the monumental treatises *Sangitarāja* and *Rasikapriya*. While the latter is a commentary on the *Gītagōvinda* of Jayadēva, the former abounds in descriptions of various *rāgās*, their *lakṣhaṇas*, *dhyānas*, *Suda Prabhandas* etc. In Orissa Purushottamadeva composed the dance drama *Abhinava Gītagōvinda* (1470 A.D.) on the model of Jayadeva's *Gītagōvinda* using 54 *rāgās* instead of only 16 *rāgās* used in the parent work. Ibrahim Shah of Jaunpur (1411–1440 A.D.) was himself an accomplished musician. Husain Shah Sharqui of Jaunpur (1458–1528 A.D.) invented Khyal while Raja Man Singh of Gwalior (1486–1518 A.D.) was responsible for evolving the Dhrupad style of singing. He has to his credit numerous Dhrupads in rare *rāgās* as well as many new *rāgās* and tunes named after his queen. A host of Rāja Mān Singh's court musicians compiled a treatise entitled *Man Kutuhal* embodying the latest theories in music and dedicated this work to their patron. Among the musicologists who enjoyed royal support during this era, mention may be made of Mandana, the Prime Minister under Hoshang Gori (1405–32 A.D.) who wrote the *Saṅgīta Mandana*; Kallinatha, the author of *Kalanidhi* (1450 A.D.) the famous commentary on the



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*Sangītaratnākara*, who flourished in the court of Immadi Devaraya; and Devanna Bhatta (*Saṅgīta Muktāvali*, 1450 A.D.) who was patronised by Praudha Devaraya.

Adverting to the 16th century, Nijaguṇa Śiva Yōgi, the chieftain of the Sambhuliṅga hill near Mysore (*Vivēkachintāmaṇi* and *Kaivalya Paddhati*, 1500 A.D.) Harinayaka (*Sangitasar*, 1502 A.D.), Meshakarna (*Rāgamāla*, 1509 A.D.) and Achyutarāya (*Talakalavaridhi*, 1530 A.D.) were the prominent royal scholars in music. Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa *alias* Lakṣmaṇa (*Saṅgīta Sūryōdaya*, 1520 A.D.) and Somabhaṭṭa (*Commentary on the Talakalavaridhi*) were inspired in writing these works by Krishnadevarāya (1509–30 A.D.). Ramamatya, author of the well known *Svaramelakalanidhi* (1550 A.D.) flourished in the court of Rāmārāya (1536–58 A.D.). The versatile Pundarika Vitthala (1510–65 A.D.) wrote a number of musical treatises like *Shadragachandrodaya* *Rāgamañjari*, *Rāgamāla* and *Nartananirṇaya* under the patronage of Burhan Khan of Farqy dynasty, Madhavasimha and Akbar.

Beginning with the closing years of the 15th century and throughout the 16th and 17th centuries, Indian music was fostered and nurtured by the Mughal rulers starting with Babur (1483–1530 A.D.) followed by Humayun (1530–56 A.D.) Akbar (1556–1605 A.D.) Jehangir (1605–27 A.D.). Shah Jahan (1628–58 A.D.) and Aurangzeb (1658–1707 A.D.). Under their patronage flourished musicologists like Ahobala (*Saṅgīta Pārijāta*, 1700 A.D.), Chatura Damodara Misra (*Saṅgīta Darpāṇa*, 1653 A.D.), and Faqurullah (*Rāgdarpāṇ*, the translation of *Man Kutuhal*, 1663 A.D.); composers like Jagannath Kavirāj; and musicians like Tansen and Baz Bahadur. The later Mughals such as Bahadur Shah I (1707–11 A.D.), Bahadur Shah II (1711–12 A.D.) and Muhammad Shah Rangila (1719–48 A.D.) devoted the greater part of their time to the pursuit of music and other artistic endeavours as a sort of spiritual and emotional compensation for the gradual decline and fall of their empire.

During the 17th century musical treatises were written by a number of scholars such as Subhankara Thakura, the ruler of Mithila (*Saṅgīta Damodara*, 1610 A.D.), Jagajyotirmalla (*Saṅgīta Sārasaṅgraha*, 1620 A.D.), Ibrahim Adil Shah II (*Kitāb-e-Nawās*, 1623 A.D.), Mūm, madi, Chikkabhupala (*Abhinavabhārata-Sārasaṅgraha*, 1630 A.D.) and



Hridaya Nārāyaṇa (*Hridaya Kantaka*, *Hridaya-Prakāśa*, (1677 A.D.). King Anup Sinha co-authored Bhavabhaṭṭa to write *Anupa Saṅgitaratnākara*, *Anupankuṣa* and *Anupa Saṅgita Vilāsa*. The dawn of the 17th century saw the emergence of Tanjore as the centre of intense musical activity first during the rule of the Nayaks and later under the Marattas. Raghunatha Nayak was the most illustrious among the Tanjore line of Nayaks as well as the main prop of their fame and glory. The origin of the dance drama form, Yakṣhagāṇa, is attributed to him. Raghunatha Nayak is best known as the author of *Saṅgita Sudha* (1620 A.D.) which he wrote jointly with his minister Gōvinda Dīkṣhita. This work explains for the first time the technique of fixing frets on the *Vīṇa* as at present. Gōvinda Dīkṣhita's son Veṅkaṭamakhi wrote his *magnum opus Chaturdandi Prakāśika* under the patronage of Raghunatha Nayak's successor, Vijayarāghava Nāyak. Veṅkaṭamakhi's greatest contribution is the codification of the system of 72 *Melakarthis* or *Jānaka Rāgās*. Among the Maratha rulers of Tanjore who succeeded the Nāyaks, Kind Shahji (1690–1710 A. D.) was a prolific composer as well as a musicologist of repute. He has to his credit more than 25 musical works inclusive of dance dramas, musical operas, Yakṣhagāṇas, Kura-vanji Natakas, etc. With the help of his court musicians, he determined the *lakṣhaṇas* of all the *rāgās* in vogue during his time, which remained in 10 manuscripts in the Sarasvathi Mahal Library at Tanjore. King Shahaji's younger brother, Tulajaji is the author of *Saṅgita Sarāmrta*, an authoritative work on contemporary music. In fact, the Maratta rulers of Tanjore laid the foundations for the present day system of Carnatic music and it was no mere coincidence that the Maratta kingdom was blessed soon after with the Trinity of Carnatic Music viz., Tyāgarāja, Muttuswāmy Dīkṣhithar and Syama Sastri, all of whom were born near Tanjore at Tiruvārur, the abode of Tyageśa, the family deity of the Maratta rulers.

The 18th century witnessed the beginning of a remarkable musical renaissance, particularly in South India. The crucial figures in this efflorescence were the Trinity of Carnatic Music. However, among them only Muttuswāmy Dīkṣhitar can be deemed to have enjoyed some measure of royal patronage and that too only during the closing years of his life at the court of the Mahārāja of Eṭṭayapuram. The royal scholars of this period included Chikkarāja Wodeyar (Gītagōpala, 1701 A.D.), Nārāyaṇadēva, the Gajapati king of Orissa (*Saṅgita Nārāyaṇa*, 1766 A. D.) and Balarāmavarma Mahārāja of Travancore



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(*Bālarāmabharatam*, 1960 A. D.). On the lines of Somesvara's *Mānasollasa*, Basappa Nāyaka wrote the encyclopaedic work *Sivatattuvaratnākara* (1720 A.D.), wherein musical aspects were dealt within *Taraṅgas*. Raṅganātha of Srirangapatna wrote the work *Saṅgita Śāstra Dugdhabhi* under the patronage of Kṛṣṇarāja Wodeyar II (1714 – 31 A. D.).

During the beginning of the 19th century, at the initiative of the Mahārāja of Jaipur, a large number of musicians and musicologists met for the first time and the results of their discussions were made known to the public. Mohammad Raza wrote his *Mamat-e-Aspahi* in 1813 A.D. The dawn of this century also saw the emergence of Svāti Tirunāl Mahārāja of Travancore as a prolific composer as well as patron of musicians. Svāti Tirunāl's contribution to music can be classified into literary and musico-literary works. While the former comprises works like *Bhakthimañjari*, *Padmanābha Śatakam*, etc., the latter includes musical operas as well as diverse types of compositions of all forms like *Svarajāti*, *Varṇam*, *Kṛithis*, *Padas*, *Javalis*, *Rāgamālikas*, *Tillānas*, etc. The musicians who enjoyed patronage in his court numbered more than a hundred including such stalwarts as Paramēśvara Bhāgavathar, Irayimman Tampi, Shatkola Gōvinda Mārār, Meruswāmi, the Tanjore Quartette etc. Other distinguished royal composers of this century were King Serfoji of Tanjore (Kavyacha Sahityacha Jannas or Dance compositions in Marathi) and Vijayaragunatha Tondaiman of Pudukkottai. Among the Setupatis of Ramnad, Muthuramalinga Setupati was a great composer with more than 100 compositions to his credit in rare as well as popular *rāgās*. Kṛṣṇarāja Wodeyar III of Mysore (1799–1868 A.D.) wrote *Svarachintāmaṇi* and *Sritattivanidhi* while Kalale Nanjarāja, the author of *Saṅgita Gaṅgadhara* (1850 A. D.) flourished in his court. Subbarāma Dīkshitar, the author of the monumental work, *Saṅgita Sampradaya Pradarśini*, enjoyed the patronage of both Veṅkatesvara Eddappa III of Eṭṭayapuram as well as Bhaskar Setupati of Ramnād.

During the early decades of the 20th century, a number of music conferences were held largely as a result of royal effort. The 1st All India Music Conference was convened by the Mahārāja of Baroda at Delhi (1910 A.D.) the 2nd and 4th conferences by the Maharaja of Rampur at Delhi (1918 A.D.) and Lucknow (1925 A.D.), respectively and the 3rd conference by the Mahārāja of Benaras at Benaras (1919 A.D.). These



conferences greatly stimulated the advancement of music by providing an opportunity of the front-rank musicologists and musicians to know one another which helped to crystallise their views on different aspects of music for mutual benefit. The first half of this century also witnessed a great spurt in musical activity in the Royal courts at Travancore and Mysore. Dr. Muthiah Bhāgavatar wrote his work *Saṅgita Kalpadruma* (1933 A. D.) under the patronage of Chittira Tirunāl Mahārāja of Travancore. The encouragement given to musicians by Kṛṣṇarāja Wodeyar IV of Mysore (1897-1943 A. D.) during his reign is a bright page in our cultural history. His court was adorned by musicians like Vīṇa Seshanna, Vīṇa Subbanna, Bidaram Kṛṣṇappa, Vāsudēvāchar etc. Because of his special interest in Vīṇa Mysore was able to establish a tradition of *Vainikas* with a distinct *bāṇi* or style of *Vina* playing. The last among the Wodeyar rulers of Mysore, the late Jayachamaraja Wodeyar (1943-75), was a prolific composer with nearly 100 compositions to his credit.

Great indeed are the mighty kings of India who have laboured unceasingly in all the fields of our music and kept alive our vast musical heritage. Not only did they sow the seeds of a musical system which reigned supreme continuously for several centuries and propped it up with permanence both in principle and practice, but they invigorated it by absorbing and assimilating many an alien musical influence which dared to rival it. The deep-probing enquiry, the composition of theoretical treatises as well as richly varied and musico-literary patterns and the expansion of musical practice achieved during the prosperous reigns of these kings are, in magnitude and excellence, unparalleled. Most of the important compositional patterns current both in the South as well as the North viz., *Kṛiti*, *Varṇa*, *Tillāna*, *Javali*, *Pāda*, *Khyāl*, *Dhrupad*, *Tappa*, *Gazal*, *Bhājans* etc., are largely traceable to both royal endeavour and patronage. Indian Music would not have risen to the present status of excellence but for the liberal patronage and contribution made by our Royal stalwarts. In fact we owe a debt of gratitude to these scholar-patrons for the efforts they have made in preserving and propagating the different systems of our music from the dawn of history down to the present day.



## The Bhangis and the Religious Reform Movement in Jodhpur in the 19th Century: 'Naval Dharma'

BY

SHYAMLAL

### *Socio-Religious Conditions of the Bhangis:*

The Bhangis are a well-known caste group in India. They are widespread all over the country. According to social status accorded to the Bhangis, they are the people who are labelled as untouchables and consequently considered so inferior that even their shadow defiles and they must be kept at a distance, segregated, excluded from the ordinary life of the community. They cannot attend schools, enter hotels, touch public tanks and wells or approach the common temples.

Although many other castes are considered as untouchables, the Bhangis are always considered to be socially the lowest one. Thus, Denzil Ibbetson<sup>1</sup> says: "...Socially they are the lowest of the low, even lower than the vagrant sansi and the gipsy nat and as a rule can hardly be said to stand even at the foot of the social ladder."

Harold R. Issacs<sup>2</sup> also wrote on this aspect as follows:—"Night soil has traditionally been the task of untouchables at the bottom of even the untouchable's scale. This kind of scavenger is known as Bhangi and Bhangis are a people apart even among people apart."

A member of this caste 'pollutes' a highcaste person. Therefore, they were compelled either to leave the road at the approach of a high

<sup>1</sup> Ibbetson, D., *Punjab Caste* (Reprinted), Delhi: B. R. Publication Corporation, 1974, p. 270.

<sup>2</sup> Issacs, H. R., *India's Ex-Untouchables*, Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1963, p. 53.



caste person, or to announce their own approach by the specific cry 'Payas', 'Payas'. This is well expressed in the following observations: "When Bhangis walk along a street or road they have to give warning of their presence by calling out 'Payse' or 'Parayse' (Keep at a distance) and a sweeper was required to wear a crow's feather on his turban to show his unclean caste."<sup>3</sup>

Such unjustifiable social tyranny was prevalent all over the country during 19th century. Until today, they are one of the most backward communities in terms of educational, religious, societal and economic status.

The Bhangis, like a few other untouchable castes in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, practised a form of Hindu religion but side by side were incorporated in it some elements of Muslim religion also. In their every day life we find the Hindu and Muslim rites and customs, being performed and Pirs and Hindu Gods being worshipped.<sup>4</sup> The Bhangi religion was a mixture of the tenets of the Hindu and the Muslim religions, as would be clear from a perusal of the books and census reports of Marwar State and the Punjab. W. Crook<sup>5</sup> describes the type of religion which was practised by the Bhangis thus: "The religion of the sweepers is a curious mixture of various faiths. Some... profess to be Hindus, other Musalmans, other Sikhs... The experience... has shown the impossibility of classing their belief under any one definite creed."

This was further noticed by Ibbetson<sup>6</sup> in the Punjab census report of 1881 and was again affirmed in 1894 by Sir Elliot<sup>7</sup> in the following words:

3 L.S.S.O' Malley, *Indian, Caste Customs*, (Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1974), p. 150.

4 Shyamlal "Sanskritization and Social Change Among the Bhangis of Jodhpur: A Case Study". *Indian Journal of Social Works*, Vol. 34, No. 1. 1973,

5 Crook, W., *The Tribes and Castes of N.W.P. and Oudh*, Vol. I, (Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent of Govt. Printing India, 1890), p.290.

6 Ibbetson, *op.cit.*, p.290.

7 Sir Elliot was quoted in *Marwar Census Report*, 1894. Report on the Census of 1891, Vol. II, Jodhpur. Jodhpur: Government Press, p.179.



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"The Bhangis profess no particular religion. They are more Musalmans, than Hindus. They bury their dead... occasionally sacrifice in the name of Lal Beg, a fowl which has its throat cut after the Musalman fashion and performed Tiga after the death of relations which is also a custom peculiar to Musalmans."

In religious matters, as in others, the Bhangis were discriminated against by orthodox Hindus. As has been mentioned earlier Bhangis, with other low castes, were not allowed to worship in Hindu temples. Every thing that was considered 'holy' and 'sacred' was reserved for the high caste Hindus. Naturally, the Bhangis had to embrace rituals, rites, and gods of other religions. However, it is important to mention here a few aspects of their religion such as nature of their *thans* (small temples) and festivals and fairs in order to view the religious reformation brought about by the life and teachings of Naval Maharaj.

An important feature of the religion of the Bhangis is found in the worship of Muslim pirs. The Bhangis owned a number of *thans*. They were located in open court-yard where water pitchers were placed, on street side, or on the platform (*Chabutary*). Since 'Lal Beg' 'Lalguru' was Muslim pir, many 'Muktia' (round shaped earthen balls worshipped to represent Lalguruji) were to be seen in the *thans*. W. Crook<sup>8</sup> writing in 1896 says: "In the first age, the ghatmet (vessels worshipped to represent Lal Beg) will be golden, in the second they will be of silver in third copper, in the fourth earthen. This is why the sweepers now worship vessels of earth and believe in Lal Beg as their prophet."

Another feature of their religion is the following of muslim festivals and fairs. Like the muslims of Marwar, the Bhangi men, women, and children used to celebrate 'Suberate' and 'Mohram'.

Faced on the one hand with social disabilities and on the other with discrimination even in religious matters many Bhangis were all too ready for change. This then, was the situation when Naval Maharaj took birth in Vikram era 1840 as a religious and social reformer in Jodhpur.

<sup>8</sup> Crook, *op.cit.*, p. 267.



*Reform Movements at a Glance:*

The socio-religious reform movements in different parts of India were the most significant phenomena of the 19th century. A galaxy of socio-religious reformers, saints and prophets appeared in the Indian firmament to awaken the sleeping masses and bring about a renaissance. Besides the famous reformers and saints like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Kesava Chandra Sen, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Ram Krishna Paramhansa and Swami Vivekananda and the movements associated with them, there were many others who rose into prominence in different religions of the country and their movements strongly influenced the areas of their activities. Sree Narayana Guru<sup>9</sup> — a great son of Kerala — and such other saints and seers revolutionised the ideas of the people. Their ultimate mission was to liberate the down-trodden people from the bondage of caste, superstitions, beliefs and traditions, ritualistic idolatry and dominance of priest. One God, one religion, one caste, seems to be the ideal which they preached and thus brought about tremendous influence on the religious, social and cultural life of the people.

In course of time, an indigenous cult known as 'Naval Dharma' came into being in Jodhpur. With the passing of time, it spread to the neighbouring states like Gujarat, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, etc. Yet, no publications have come out on history, philosophy and teachings of 'Naval Dharma'. Thus a large number of manuscripts on 'Naval Dharma' are still unpublished. The history of this religious movement in all its details is yet to be compiled on a scientific basis. A notable work in this field is 'Naval Prakash' by Aphu Ram Changra<sup>10</sup> — a Bhangi from Maharashtra. In this small booklet, he has given a description of the life and also reproduced some original *bhaians* of Naval Maharaj. A brief discussion on the history and philosophy of the movement in Jodhpur, a princely State of 19th century, is relevant here.

9 Samuel, V. T., *One Caste, One Religion, One God: A Study of Sree Narayana Guru*, (New Delhi: Sterling Publication, 1977).

10 Changra, A. B. *Naval Prakash*, (Jaganw: Jaganw Kala Darsan, 1939.)



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### *Life of Naval Maharaj:*

In the Nagaur district of Rajasthan, there is a village called Harsalla. At the time of the birth of Naval Maharaj, Harsalla was a rather obscure village. It was a multi-caste village, each having a different economic and social status. During the 19th century Kusal, a poor and illiterate man, lived in the village with his wife Singari. Singari was a simple and working woman. They were the members of the Bhangi caste. Their religious life centred on the worship of Hindu gods and goddesses. Naval Maharaj was born to this couple in Vikram era 1840 (1783 A. D.) in the month of Bhadrapad. It was the sacred day of Wednesday\*. His parents called him 'Naal' an affectionate and shortened form of the name Naval Ram.

Naval's mother died before he was one year old. Since then his father became his chief benefactor. As a child he is said to have had a spiritual bent. He was pious and made it a habit to recite religious *bhajans* every day. Observing his devotion, his calm and peaceful nature and his spiritual bent, his father was happy about him.

In his childhood Naval came into contact with Karta Ram Maharaj an untouchable and religious *guru* of Meghwals of the village. Naval Maharaj accepted Karta Ram Maharaj as his *guru*. As a child, Naval used to take the cattle to jungle for grazing. Once, it is said:

"When he (Naval) was looking after his cows in the jungle, a saint came and asked him to get something to light his chilam (the upper most part of the hubble bubble). Naval obeyed the saint who was actually Kabirji. So Naval met Kabirji and became his disciple.<sup>11</sup>

\*It is necessary to note here that the date of birth of Naval Maharaj has become a controversial issue in recent years. Aphu Ram in his 'Naval Prakash' writes that Naval Maharaj was born in Vikram Samvat 1845. It was the fourteenth day of Vad Swan, whereas, Mani Ram ascribes an almost different date. According to him, it was the puran Mashi of Sud Kartik. For the distinction between Aphu Ram's and Mani Ram's verdict, see, Nadvi Prakash'. For a fuller discussion, see also, A printed lecture of Badri Ram Maharaj — the chief preceptor of Naval Dharma, which was delivered on the occasion of Naval Jayanti at Jodhpur.

<sup>11</sup> Ratan Ram, 'The Changing Religion of the Bhangis of Delhi: A Case of Sanskritization', in *Aspects of Religion in Indian Society* (ed.) Vidyarthi, L. P., Meerut: Kedar Nath Ram Nath, 1960, p.179.



At his marriageable age, his relatives wanted to get him married. Thus, according to the prevailing customs, Naval Ram married Juma. After his marriage, Naval Ram began a new phase of his life. During this period, there was no conflict between worldly desires and attractions and yearning for spiritual life.

Being a member of Bhangi community, which had no religious privilege, Naval's high attainment in the field of religion and meditation soon became a matter of envy for the higher caste Hindus. Angered by this, the orthodox villagers began to harass Naval and consequently forced him to leave the village and go to Jodhpur. Here he camped at Kantalia Thakur's haveli, where the Bhangis gathered round him to listen to his teachings. After some years, he founded his own Dharma in Vikram era 1860 in Jodhpur in order to reform the community and to teach and propagate the *nirgun* philosophy.

Naval is said to have performed numerous miracles throughout his life about which many stories are current. Some such stories have been narrated by Ram Ratan. According to him:<sup>12</sup>

"Once a pet cow of His Highness of Jodhpur State died. His Highness came to know about Naval Maharaj, who was immediately called to His Highness' palace and was requested to give life to the dead cow. Maharaj wrapped in a coarse cloth and sat in meditation. The cow became alive.

"A cobbler's son died in the city of Ajmir. The dead body of the boy was laid down near the Maharaj and the boy became alive.

"In a religious gathering (satsang) instead of sweets, some stones were kept. But when Maharaj touched them to distribute among the gathering, the stones at-once turned into sweets."

During his life time Naval Maharaj spent most of his time among the Bhangis and other untouchables of Marwar State. Though his activities were mostly confined to Marwar, he travelled from place to place, throughout Rajputana, parts of North India, Ceylon and Burma.

In this period of wandering from place to place, Naval Maharaj

12 Ram Ratan, *op.cit.* p.179.



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came to know about one great personality of the time. Naval Maharaj desired to meet Asha Bharti, who was a famous Hindu saint. Asha Bharti being a twice born Hindu saint refused even to meet Naval Maharaj. Thus, Naval could not see him and returned back. After Naval had left, Asha Bharti saw hidden spiritual tenets in him through his spiritual power. Later on, Asha Bharti<sup>13</sup> described Naval Maharaj in the following words:

मानो मातृगं ऋषि आयो काहण जीवा हाणरी,  
करुणानिधि कबीर प्रगट्ओं मोड़ी पड़ी पिछाणरी ।।  
कैवे आशा भारती धिन नवल संत सुजान री,  
जिन रोस-रोस ना कियो मन माथे पोधियां परमाण री ॥

Naval Maharaj is also said to have discussed a few spiritual points with Bananathji Maharaj — a man who was well-versed in the mysteries of *yoga* and philosophy. Bananathji<sup>14</sup> asked:

मेरा स्वरूप अनाद है, तू क्या लखे अजाणि ।  
मैं रहता परमात्मा, तां की कहूँ निसानी ॥

Naval Maharaj<sup>15</sup> answered this question by saying:

नाथ जी तुम जुग जुग जाणी आये ।  
हम तो अजाण आप नित जाणी, कहो हम कहाँ से आये ।  
चार खाण से टाल बताओं, तब हम निश्चय पाये ॥  
नाथ जी तुम जुग जुग जागी आऐ ।

After many years of continuous work in and around Jodhpur, Maharaj's soul left for its heavenly abode and the mortal remains were buried at a Bhangi Bustee in Jodhpur. The Bustee, which soon became the principal seat of pilgrimage, is now known as 'Naval Bustee'. Thus ended Naval Maharaj's long years' eventful career in the foundation and propagation of a new Dharma in Jodhpur. After his death, his sons and grand-children continued the traditions of the Dharma. A genealogy of the descendants of Naval Maharaj is given below:

<sup>13</sup> For a fuller discussion, see, A printed lecture of Badri Ram Maharaj which was delivered on the occasion of Naval Jayanti, n.d., p.3.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p.4.



Naval Ram Maharaj



Daya Ram Maharaj



Ram Baksh Maharaj



Badri Ram Maharaj

### *Tenets of Naval Dharma:*

Naval Maharaj as referred to earlier, was born as an untouchable Hindu and remained an untouchable Hindu until his death in Vikram era 1965. He did not attempt to establish any new religion or dogma. But the very acts he performed remain as testimonies to his religious reforms.

Since the temple was a centre of orthodox Hindu religious activities, Naval Maharaj urged the Bhangis and other untouchables, who had no access to the sacrosanct of the orthodox Hindu temples, to follow the Kabir's *nirgun* teachings. Condemning the idol worship and rigidity of the existing rules and regulations, Naval Maharaj remained engaged in the uplift of his own community from the terrible social conditions.

The followers of Naval Dharma believe in the worship and adoration of the 'eternal, unsearchable, and immutable being who is a creator and preserver of the universe. In the Naval Dharma Param Brahma, the Absolute Reality is said to be 'Gurudev' 'Nirankar (without shape)' 'Anadi' (without end). Thus, he is indescribable beyond all categories of thoughts. However, 'Jeev' (life) alone is the cause of the world creation.

The philosophy of 'Naval Dharma' is in accordance with the saying of Kabir. It refutes the whole system of idol worship. The followers of Kabir do not believe in caste or class system. Their aim is to unite all on the common platform of the worship of 'Jeev' as God.

'Naval Dharma' does not prescribe the worship of any other gods or goddesses except 'Jeev'. It does not recognise the Hindu pantheon and preaches against idol worship of any kind. In fact, Naval Maharaj tried to remove the remote possibility of Hindu idol-worship by declaring that worship is due, not to any body, but to the eternal guru 'Param Brahma'. He, being the only destroyer of



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ignorance, is the only true guru. Thus, we do not find any kind of idol worship in Naval Dharma. Even its guru Naval Maharaj is not worshipped like other contemporary religious reformers in the country.

Naval Maharaj's idea of religious teachings is indicated in the instructions given to his followers. He laid down the following goals:<sup>16</sup>

- 1 If thou want to kill, kill the desire of susceptibility.
- 2 If thou want to win, win temptation.
- 3 If thou want to swallow, swallow the anger.
- 4 If thou want to drink, drink the syrup of god by meditation.
- 5 If thou want to receive, receive the blessing.
- 6 If thou want to come, come to help the poor.
- 7 If thou want to foresake, foresake bad deeds and cruelty.
- 8 If thou want to utter, utter sweet words.
- 9 If thou want to listen, listen to the praise of god and cries of the poor.
- 10 If thou want to wear anything, wear the garments of goodness.
- 11 If thou want to give at all, give unseen and forget.
- 12 If thou want to go, go to holy shrines.
- 13 If thou want to weigh, weigh by words and weigh them well.
- 14 If thou want to see, see thyself and
- 15 Do your duty and worldly happiness is yours.

### *Disciples and their Duties:*

Naval Dharma provides both the traditional systems of the Hindu i.e., *garhastya* and *sanyasa* for its devotees. The lay devotees remain engaged in their houses and obey the regulation of the Dharma prescribed for them. The Maharaj of the sect puts on white cloths (pitambari). He wears a chain round his neck. He also keeps a round stick called *Navalban Ramban* in his hand. In a Bustee where many followers of the Dharma reside, the guru stays in any one of the

<sup>16</sup> Changra, A.R., *op.cit.*, pp. 18-19.



devotee's houses which serves as a meeting place for the Bustee. Here the devotees gather to perform their simple ceremonies and *bhajans* are sung sometimes throughout the night. Devotees massage his feet, give him a bath and delicious food and make him feel comfortable as much as possible. Guru sits on a cot while the devotees sit on the ground. His feet are touched with hands or forehead by devotees. They also offer sweets, fruits and money. Guru's dress is considered to be the best present. Gurus neither eat meat nor drink liquor. Even some of the lay devotees do not eat meat and drink liquor. The Dharma does not prescribe rigid asceticism but lays stress on the disciplined habit to control body and mind.

Disciples are divided into three categories, i.e., (1) Kotwal, (2) Bhandari, and (3) Mehant. A person, who renders his services to guru Maharaj and arranges for *satsang*, is known as a 'Kotwal', and works under the guidance of guru. The treasurer known by the title of 'Bhandari' maintains an office to regulate the account of the income of the principal seat of Dharma and expenditure. The highest place of devotees order in the 'Naval Dharma' is called 'Mehant'. Mehants are treated with great respect; both in the spiritual affairs and in the organisational matters their verdict is given due importance. Their discourses are accepted as most authentic exposition of the religion.

One notable point regarding the disciples of the Dharma is that both men and women can become lay devotees and are also allowed to follow monastic order. Women are not forbidden to enter into it and ever since the days of Nawal Maharaj, this rule has been in practice. Some prominent women devotees of the Dharma in Jodhpur were 'Padi Maharaj' 'Jawri Bai Maharaj' and 'Premi Maharaj' (also called Premdass Maharaj).

The preceptors of 'Naval Dharma' are required to observe certain simple physical and mental exercises daily in the temple or in open and secluded place. In the morning, they keep their face towards east or north and chant various hymns composed by Naval Maharaj in peculiar yogic postures for a few minutes. After this, they perform *arti*. And the same process is repeated in the evening also.

#### *Festivals:*

A temple of Naval Maharaj is situated at Moka Bhangi Bustee on a Tiba near the public latrines and dumping station. The temple is



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known as 'Maharishi Naval Ashram' meaning the abode of Naval Maharaj. This temple was constructed in the memory of Naval Maharaj by His Highness of Jodhpur Darbar, late Shri Hanwant Singh Maharaj in the year 1947. The present Badri Ram Maharaj is the keeper of 'Gurudwara'. He is the chief guru of the Bhangis in both India and Pakistan. The Bhangis living in Jodhpur and in the other States make contributions in the form of cash.

A special festival known as 'Naval Jayanti' is held not only at Jodhpur, the principal centre of the Dharma, but also in different places in Rajasthan, Punjab, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat etc., in the month of Bhadrapad (Aug-Sept) every year to commemorate the 'birth-day' of Naval Maharaj. It is considered to be the main festival of 'Naval Dharma'. The followers from far and near gather at Jodhpur to celebrate the day. Unlike the ceremonies of the Hindus, it is a simple one. There are no complicated rituals. Just after the sun rise, the chief preceptor chants the hymns composed by Naval Maharaj, performs *arti* and the devotees sing his glory in deep reverence. Just after this, devotees offer something in cash.

On the very day of the festival, a procession of Naval Maharaj is also taken out through the main Bazaar of the city. Bhajans and slogans praising the Maharaj are sung and shouted respectively. Likewise, on the same evening *satsang* is organised. Bhajans which they sing are of recent composition but majority of them are traditional. Many of them are composed by Naval, Kabir, Meera etc. All of them are in 'Marwari dialect'. One bhajan follows the other. In the interval between bhajans, the Guru and listeners call upon the singer to explain the meaning of the verse (Bhajans etc.) he had sung or solve the problem put forward by them. And this frequently gives rise to an open discussion which is ended at times by an authoritative exposition on the part of guru or some one else. This free and frank discussion is called 'gian charcha' which literally means 'spiritual discussion'. I would like to mention here that though the festival is celebrated in honour of Naval Maharaj by his followers, it may be attended by gurus and their followers of other sects too viz., Nath panthi, Dattatreya panthi, Nanak panthi, etc.



Another special function of 'Naval Dharma' is 'Nirvan day' i.e., the day Maharaj's soul (Naval) left for its heavenly abode. It is observed in the month of Mah (January-February) every year at Jodhpur and also in different places in Delhi, U.P., Rajasthan etc. There are no complicated rituals. The chief preceptor of Naval Ashram arranges food for the devotees. The food served for the devotees in the evening of the day is known as 'Bhandara'. Before or after taking food devotees offer some cash i.e., 'Dakshina' or 'Bhaint' to chief preceptor. Soon after the end of the principal festival, *satsang* is organised and the function is attended by a large number of Mehan, Bhandari, Sadhu and lay devotees. Thus their unity is strengthened.

#### *Organization:*

The church or Naval Dharma is a democratic one. There is no distinction between the teachers and disciples. It is believed that all are disciples in relation to him 'Param Brahma'. Jodhpur is the principal seat of the Dharma, which is managed by the grand children of Naval Maharaj. Although the chief preceptor's abode remains fixed at Jodhpur for ever, yet he does not remain attached to Jodhpur throughout the year. In fact, he moves on his preaching tours and discusses organizational matters. The family members of the chief preceptor themselves look after the management at Jodhpur.

Besides the principal centre at Jodhpur, there are number of smaller temples, not only in Rajasthan, but also in neighbouring provinces. According to the present chief preceptor, Badri Ram Maharaj, there are 5 temples in Rajasthan, 2 in Delhi, 2 in Maharashtra, 1 in Assam, 3 in Hyderabad and 3 in Karachi. These temples are maintained by the devotees of the mohallas and served as the meeting grounds of Naval mates and as centres of simple ceremonies of the Dharma.

#### *Spreading:*

'Naval Dharma' was in fact an off-shoot of *Nirgun Bhagti* movement — a distinctly religious movement which took shape in late 19th and early 20th centuries. The downtrodden people who were deprived of Hindu Dharma and its philosophy for centuries together were much attracted by its simple devotional songs, touching bhajans and unostentatious rituals. Naval Maharaj by his long missionary career, had established strong foundations for his new Dharma and propagated it not only throughout the Marwar State but also in the other parts of the



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Rajputana presidency — then Princely States. His principal disciples inspired by his teachings carried on his mission with great zeal and spread it beyond Jodhpur.

Now, 'Naval Dharma' has established itself in Jodhpur and in the other States too. With the passage of time its popularity among the Bhangis is increasing, but it has not caught the attention of the intellectual world.







## The Watandars of Hyderabad State with Special Reference to Warangal Subah

BY

V. R. K. REDDY

Watan is one of the most ancient tenures arising out of the services rendered by several grades of hereditary village officers, such as *Patels* *Patwaris*. *Deshmukhs* *Deshpaudyas* *Sirdeshmukhs* and *Sirdeshpandyas*. This institution of hereditary office-bearers of *watandars* dates as far back as the early Dravidian Kingdoms, and has survived all the political changes through which the Deccan has passed.<sup>1</sup> The succeeding conquerors, however careless regarding differences of right in the soil, could not work without this village *Patel* and *Patwari*, and as these officials always held certain lands revenue-free by virtue of their offices, the tenure of land arising out of the official position has commonly survived until recent times.<sup>2</sup> *Watandars* in Hyderabad State and more so in Warangal *Subah*<sup>3</sup> played a leading role in the rural economic scene. The *Patels* and *Patwaris* had been the virtual rulers of Hyderabad. Lack of vigilant control of the *taluk* officials or their connivance, enabled them to rule over their villages more despotically than ever, confident of the backing and support of their superiors.<sup>4</sup> They, along with *Deshmukhs*,<sup>5</sup> subjected the rural population to different forms of excesses and exploitation which in turn roused popular feelings against the regime. Based mainly on Warangal *Subedari* Records,<sup>6</sup> an assessment is made of the rôle played

1 H.E.A. the Nizam's Govt., *Revenue Administration Report*, 1914-15 A.D., pp. 57-58) here in after referred to as R.A.R.)

2 A. I. Qureshi, *The Economic Development of Hyderabad*, Vol. I, The Orient Longman's Ltd., Madras, 1947, pp. 112-113.

3 Revenue Division which consisted of the three Eastern Districts of Warangal, Karimnagar and Adilabad of H. E. H. the Nizam's Dominions.

4 Syed Abid Ali Hussain, *Whither Hyderabad*, The B.N. Press: Madras, 1935, p. 79.

5 Hereditary head-men of the village.

6 Voluminous Urdu Records preserved in the office of the Commissioner, Land Revenue, Govt. of Andhra Pradesh, Hyderabad.



by these *Watandars* in hastening and accentuating the economic crisis and unrest that beset the State during the reign of the last Nizam.<sup>7</sup>

Each village had its regular complement of officers, who were usually *Watandars* or hereditary village officials. The officers, on whose services government was mainly dependent, consisted of the *Patels*, who were generally two in each village, one for revenue (*Mali Patel*) and the other for police purposes (*Police Patel*); the *Patwari* who was the clerk and accountant; the *Talari* who was the village peon for collection purposes; a *Setsindhi* for every 50 houses in the village as a watchman; a *Neri* kept in the charge of irrigational works; and a *Dheir*, a man of low caste employed as a watchman, messenger and *Begari*<sup>8</sup> in the village establishment.<sup>9</sup> These Village Officers were paid by government and the village community. During the time of the last Nizam, the *Patels* and *Patwaris* were allowed cash amounts as remuneration instead of the revenue-free lands formerly held by them. These lands were fully assessed like other government lands and were held by the village officers on the ordinary Ryotwari tenure without any peculiarity attaching to them. The cash remuneration allowed to the *Patels* and *Patwaris* was calculated according to a progressively decreasing scale fixed by government: i.e., the larger the collections the smaller the rate at which remuneration was calculated.<sup>10</sup> Besides this fixed scale, they were also paid at the rate of 2 pies<sup>11</sup> each out of one anna from the village service fund. Each *Talari* and *Setsindhi* got 24 Rupees and *Neri* 36 Rupees per annum from the Government. The *Talari* also shared 2 pies per annum of the village service fund.<sup>12</sup> The *Dheir* got 4 pies out of the one anna cess of the service fund.<sup>13</sup> In addition to this cash remuneration, the village artisans and menials such as the *Neri*, the *Setsindhi*, the shroff (cashier), the potter, the blacksmith, the goldsmith, the carpenter, the barber, the washerman, etc., who rendered service to the village community were granted *Balota Inams*<sup>14</sup> or lands

7- Mir Osman Alikhan, (1911-1948).

8 *Vetti* or forced labour was extracted from him.

9 Moulvi Cheragh Ali, *Hyderabad (Deccan) under Sir Salar Jung*, Vol.I, Bombay, 1884, p.124.

10 *R.A.R., op.cit.*, p. 58.

11 6 pies made one anna and 16 annas one rupee.

12 Collected @ one anna per rupee on land revenue for village development.

13 Moulvi Cheragh Ali, *op. cit.*, pp. 124-125.

14 Land grants given for the maintenance of the village artisans.



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with only  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the original assessment.<sup>15</sup> These *Balotadars* have also received fixed quantity of grain per plough from the cultivators at the time of harvest.

In the Nizam's Dominions, prior to the *Zillabandi*<sup>16</sup> of Sir Salar Jung I, the *Deshmukhs* and *Deshpandyas*<sup>17</sup> were entrusted with the entire revenue administration of their districts, and in return for their services enjoyed, as usual, grants of land as well as cash remuneration. After the *Zillabandi* these officers were relieved of their duties and the grants made to them were confiscated by Government. But they were allowed instead a fixed cash grant calculated at  $7\frac{1}{2}$  per cent on the revenue collections, out of which 5 per cent was the share of *Deshmukhs* and  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent that of *Deshpandyas*. This fixed cash grant was known as *Rusum-i-Zamindari* and was since then paid to the *Deshmukhs* and *Deshpandyas* without requiring them of any service.<sup>18</sup> The *Watans* of *Sirdeshmukh*<sup>19</sup> and *Sirdeshpandya*<sup>20</sup> were held by not many a person. As far as Warangal Subah was concerned, only one Venkat Murali Manohar Rao, of Luxettipet taluq in Adilabad district was referred to as *Sirdeshmukh*.<sup>21</sup> The rate of cash remuneration paid to him was not known. For a portion of H.H. the Nizam's territories, Raja Ray Rayan Bahadur, a nobleman, was the *Sirdeshpandya*, the post being hereditary in his family. No duties were performed by the family, but as in the case of the other *Watandars*, a fixed cash grant calculated at one per cent on the revenue collection was paid to the family. This grant was called *Rusum-i-Sirdeshpandyagiri*.<sup>22</sup>

Cash payments or scale to *Watandars* cost the state treasury not an inconsiderable amount. For the year 1941, the amounts sanctioned for payment to *police patels* for Hyderabad State and Warangal Subah were Rs. 5,10,000/- and Rs. 1,13,104/- respectively and for *Sethsindhis*,

15 *Settlement Report of Warangal Taluka of Warangal District*, 1893, Central Jail Press: Hyderabad, n.d. p. 67.

16 *Constitution of the Districts in 1865 A.D.*

17 *District Accountants*.

18 *R.A.R. op.cit.*, p. 58.

19 Head of the Village headmen.

20 Head of the District Accountants.

21 Subedari Warangal (here in after referred to as S. W.), File No. 24 of 1937 and Record No. 859 of 1938.

22 *R.A.R. op.cit.*, p. 59.



the amounts sanctioned for the same year were Rs. 2,10,000/- and Rs. 13,455/- respectively.<sup>23</sup> For the year 1948, the amounts sanctioned for the scale of *Malipatels* for Hyderabad State and Warangal *Subah* were Rs. 5,00,000 and Rs. 1,15,155 respectively; scale of *Patwaris* covered Rs. 11,37,000/- and Rs. 2,75,368/-; salary of *Netris* amounted to Rs. 8,288/- and Rs. 2,309/- and the stationary of *Patwaris* carried Rs. 1,68,600/- and Rs. 41,087/- respectively.<sup>24</sup> The scale of *Patels* and *Patwaris*, they being the principal officers of the village administration, commanded more than  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the sanctioned amount. *Rusum* paid to *Deshmukhs* and *Deshpandyas* was also a sizeable amount. The amounts sanctioned for this purpose for the year 1946 for Hyderabad State and Warangal *Subah* were Rs. 6,40,973/- and Rs. 1,11,986/- respectively.<sup>25</sup>

Besides these cash remunerations from the State, there were several other factors which contributed to the dominant social and economic position of *Patels*, *Patwaris* and *Deshmukhs*. First, in majority of the villages, all these posts were held by one and the same member or by members of the same and single family.<sup>26</sup> This amounted to the combining of the powers of police, revenue collection, land recording and village headmanship, in the hands of a single person or family. Supervision of Taluq officials being slack and ineffective,<sup>27</sup> this concentration of powers in the hands of *Watandars* gave them free and vast scope to do manoeuvring in land grabbing, land allotment, land recording, revenue collection and general administration of the village. Second, full *Watandari* rights of a number of villages was vested in the hands of a single member or single family. The family of Ramachandra Rao, *Deshpandya* had *Mali*,<sup>28</sup> *Kotwali*<sup>29</sup> and *Patwarigiri* rights over 105 villages in the Manickgadh area of Rajura Taluq in Adilabad District.<sup>30</sup> Venkat Murali Manohar Rao, *Sirdeshmukh*, enjoyed *Mali* and *Police Patelgiri* rights in 22 villages of Luxettipet Taluq in Adilabad district.<sup>31</sup>

23 S.W. File No. 10 of 1941 and Record No. 2978 of 1941.

24 S.W. File No. 4 of 1948, and Record No. 2443, of 1948.

25 S.W. File No. 7 of 1946 and Record No. 1291 of 1946.

26 S.W. File No. 27 of 1936 and Record No. 830 of 1939.

27 *Meezan*, 26th March 1946.

28 Refers to the office of *Malipatel* who collects revenue. *Mali* is derived from *Mal*, which means revenue.

29 Refers to police patel.

30 S.W. File, No. 27 of 1936 and Record No. 830 of 1939.

31 S.W. File No. 24 of 1937 and Record No. 859 of 1938.



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Even though *Asaldars*<sup>32</sup> appointed *Gumasthas*<sup>33</sup> on their behalf to discharge their duties in different villages, this made no difference to the enjoyment and exercise of vast and varied powers and authority by these big *Watandars*, for the reason that the *Gumasthas* being dependent on the will and pleasure of *Asaldars*, had in short become their tools and mouthpieces.

Third, huge and best lands were seized by *Deshmukhs* in the 1860's and 1870's, consequent on the reforms introduced by Salar Jung I, in the system of revenue collection. When *Deshmukhs* were removed from their former role as revenue farmers<sup>34</sup> and in their place direct revenue collection by the state was introduced, they were given land in compensation besides cash remuneration or *Rusum*. Most of them availed of the opportunity to seize as much of the best land as they could. The *Deshmukhs* were thus given a dominant position in the rural economy which they proceed resolutely to strengthen during the succeeding decades.<sup>35</sup> It was not possible to directly cultivate more than a few hundred acres, even with the use of *Bagelas*<sup>36</sup>; as a result, most of their land was either let out on tenancy or was left fallow.

Fourth, the *Deshmukhs* in Telingana<sup>37</sup> besides being landlords, also practised money lending unlike the money lenders in the *Marathwada* region<sup>38</sup> of Hyderabad State, who were mainly *Marwaris*<sup>39</sup> taking no direct interest in cultivation and being satisfied to receive rents. In this context, the introduction of the requirement to pay land revenue in cash in the late nineteenth century became significant. Cash was very scarce in the villages and the major source of it was the landlord.<sup>40</sup> Co-operative institutions and Government Departments could only touch the

32 Village Officials enjoying original *Watan* rights by means of *Sanad* or grant from H.E.H. the Nizam.

33 Persons appointed by *Asaldars* with the permission of the Government to carry on duties on their behalf.

34 Otherwise known as *Tahuddars*, i.e., those who were given the right of revenue collection by means of auctioning.

35 Barry Pavier, "The Telangana Armed Struggle" in the Economic and political weekly, special number, August 1974, Vol. IX, p.1413.

36 Labourers who were tied to master's service due to indebtedness.

37 Eight Telugu-speaking districts of Nizam's Dominions.

38 Eight Marathi and Kannada speaking districts of Nizam's Dominions.

39 Professional money lenders.

40 Barry Pavier, *op.cit.*, pp. 1413 and 1417.



fringe of the rural credit needs. They could only meet 6.58% and 2.39% of the rural credit needs in the State respectively whereas 31.39%, 38.30% and 21.34% of the credit was supplied by professional money lenders, cultivating families and non-cultivating-non-professional money lenders, respectively.<sup>41</sup> The number of debts due to cultivating families was the highest in Warangal District,<sup>42</sup> which pointed to the preponderance of big and wealthy *Deshmukhs* in the District. Most of the cash of the landlords was obtained from the proceeds of their excise contracts. In Hyderabad State toddy contracts were given on *Ijara*<sup>43</sup> basis ranging from one year to ten years covering few villages, Taluqs or even an entire district. On account of enjoying these excise *Ijaras*, a large number of *Deshmukhs* improved their economic position and finally became tremendously rich local magnates.<sup>44</sup> Families held monopolies for generations together. To cite an instance, Pingali family held the monopoly of *Sendi*<sup>45</sup> contract in all the Taluqs of Warangal District since 1884 A.D.<sup>46</sup>

Besides cash, grain was also lent by big landlords and rich peasants who had a grain surplus to small peasants, tenants and agricultural labourers. In the rural parts money-lending and grain dealing were so inseparably combined in one person that a co-operative society, however, well-organised, found it very difficult to compete.<sup>47</sup> Transactions in kind are locally known in *Telingana* as '*Nagpech*'<sup>48</sup> under which the return for the grain lent was  $1\frac{1}{2}$  times in six months and  $2\frac{1}{2}$  times in 12 months, i.e., at 125 per cent interest. Everywhere the nature of these transactions was such that once the royt got involved in them, it was extremely difficult for him to get out.<sup>49</sup> The ultimate and the most important effect of money-lending and grain dealing that was freely indulged in by *Deshmukhs* and

41 S. Kesava Iyengar, *Rural Economic Enquiries*, 1949-51, p. 412.

42 *Ibid.*

43 Lease or Kowl.

44 Madiraju Ramakoteswara Rao, *Sweeya Charita*, Warangal, Sarvari (Telugu Calendar year), p.203.

45 Toddy that is extracted from toddy trees.

46 Office of the first Talukadar, Warangal, File No. 17 of 1911 and Record No. 323 of 1914.

47 H. E. H. The Nizam's Government, The Department of Statistics: *Some Economic facts and figures*, Hyderabad-Dn-Govt. Central Press, 1937, p.18.

48 System of grain lending on interest in kind.

49 S. M. Bharucha, *Agriculture Indebtedness in H. E. H. the Nizam's Dominions* Govt. Central Press, Hyd. Dyd. Dn. 1937, p. 84.



village officers was a wave of land alienation in their favour. During the period of the depression, it was marked; the rich peasants had an excess bullock-capacity which could be utilised in cultivating more land which in turn would result in an increase of production and thereby help to offset the fall in prices.<sup>50</sup> The effect of high price of land coupled with want of saving habits, prevented tenants from becoming owners while it was an easy process for owners to be degraded into tenants on account of improvidence among cultivating owners. The result was that land tended to concentrate in the hands of money-lenders both professional and agricultural. On account of moderate rates of assessment, land had become a profitable investment for well-to-do people.<sup>51</sup> Total land that had passed out during the 16 years preceding 1937 from the possession of cultivators out of the occupied area of 10,27,675 acres into the possession of money-lenders and village officers was 1,06,454 acres.<sup>52</sup> This worked out at 10.4% of the total occupied area; 5.9% to agricultural money lenders, 3.4% to non-agricultural money lenders, and 1.1 per cent to *Patwaris*, and their relatives.<sup>53</sup> Total area of land that was in 1937 in the *Khatas*<sup>54</sup> of village officers and agricultural and non-agricultural money lenders out of the occupied area of 10,27,695 acres was 2,90,012 acres which might work out to 30%.<sup>55</sup>

The eminent social and economic position and the huge concentration of lands and wealth in the hands of *Patahs*, *Patwaris*, *Deshmukhs* *Deshpandys* as outlined above, have, in the main, enabled them to establish their domination in rural Hyderabad and perpetuate and consolidate it by perpetrating different types of atrocities and excesses on the poor, ignorant and illiterate masses. Either because of the vast influence which these *Watandars* enjoyed in government circles, or because of the corrupt means used to influence the officials or because of the fact that they were considered as the loyal arm of the government, the control exercised and the punishment given by the government for the misdeeds of these village officials was in general ineffective and non-deterrent. To

50 Barry Pavier, *op. cit.*, p. 1417.

51 S. M. Bharucha, *op.cit.*, p. 5.

52 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

53 S. Kesava Iyengar, *op.cit.*, p. 111.

54 In the accounts.

55 S. M. Bharucha, *op.cit.*, p. 6.



climax it, there were many instances where *Taluq* and *Division*<sup>56</sup> officials abetted or connived with the village officials in their excesses. Further the right of appeal which consisted in approaching the entire official ladder from *Tahasildar* in the bottom to *Revenue Member*<sup>57</sup> or even the President of the Executive Council<sup>58</sup> for favourable judgement in a case of dispute, right or facility, was fully utilised to maximum advantage by these *Watandars*. It so frequently happened that if in a particular case, the lower official gave an adverse decision or inflicted strict punishment, the *Patel*, *Patwari* or *Deshmukh* by appealing to higher authority, got judgement in his favour or at least got the punishment reduced considerably.<sup>59</sup> Narration of a few cases would illustrate this tendency in greater limelight.

The *Patwaris* who were responsible for making all the entries regarding the particulars of land held and the amount of tax paid by *Pattadars*, became notorious for making wrong entries and thereby made personal gain at the expense of ignorant and poor peasants. To quote an instance Lekshinarsimhachary, *Patwari* of Lingaraj palle, *Ijara*<sup>60</sup> village, in Warangal Taluq, was found guilty by *First Talukdar*<sup>61</sup> of Warangal of collecting Rs. 2/- per *bigha*<sup>62</sup> for entering the names of the cultivators as *Shikmidars*.<sup>63</sup> He was dismissed from the post. He appealed to *Subcdar*<sup>64</sup> of Warangal on this decision of the *First Talukdar*, and got the punishment revised and reduced to just one year suspension and then reinstatement.<sup>65</sup> Conflicting judgements of the Revenue officials thus helped the erring village officials to escape with lighter punishments. To quote another instance of similar nature, the ryots of Kakkeri village of Khammam Taluq of Warangal district complained to the Division Officer, Khammam that one Ramachander Rao, *Malipatel*

56 Two or three *Taluks* constituted a Division over which a Division Officer or *Second Talukdar* was appointed.

57 Revenue Minister.

58 Prime Minister.

57 Office of the Director-General of Revenue, *Telingana*, File No. 17 of 1926 and Record No. 550 of 1947.

60 Village that was given on lease for land development.

61 District Collector.

62 1/3 of an acre.

63 Cultivators in occupation of the land having permanent rights of tenancy.

64 Revenue Commissioner for the three districts of Warangal, Karimnagar and Adilabad.

65 S.W. File No. 60 of 1913 and Record No. 2202 of 1916.



collected Rs. 5/- per plough on the pretext that it was for *Nazrana*,<sup>66</sup> but was neither remitted nor entered in *Pavti*,<sup>67</sup> and eight annas per rupee in excess of land revenue.<sup>68</sup> The Division Officer decided that he should be removed from service and Rs. 864/- should be collected from him and distributed to ryots which they very much sought. Getting dissatisfied with this decision, the *Malipatel* appealed to *First Talukdar* who gave the judgement that the village officer should only be suspended from service for two years with no need to pay the money back that was collected illegally. In spite of getting much reduction in the punishment that was inflicted by the Division Officer, Ramachander Rao hoping to get further concession, appealed on the decision of *First Talukdar* to *Subedar*, who of course upheld the decision of the *First Talukdar*. Watering down of punishments in like manner could only encourage and embolden the village officials in collecting illegal payments and thereby enrich themselves.

There were instances when the ryots could not take advantage of the decision of the Revenue Courts in their favour due to local domination and exercise of pressure by *Deshmukhs*. To cite an instance, some ryots of Kesavapuram Village in Manukota Taluq of Warangal district were in occupation of 80 acres of chalka<sup>69</sup> land even before 1904 with *Patta* in their name. For this village Nookala Jagannatha Reddy leading among the Zamindars<sup>70</sup> of Manukota Taluq, was serving as police and *Malipatel*. With an eye to grab this land, he stopped giving receipts to ryots for land revenue payment since 1917. In this operation he took one Kusu Bhadraiah, a merchant as an associate who gave to these ryots sometime back 3 *Kundas*<sup>71</sup> of *jowar* and Rs. 15/- which with exorbitant interest got accumulated to 16 *puttis*<sup>72</sup> of *jowar* and Rs. 770. Under this accumulated debt, the land was written in the name of Bhadraiah and occupied by the *Deshmukh*. The ryots appealed to Revenue Secretary against this illegal occupation and got the orders for the restoration of their lands. But when they tried to take possession of their lands, they were prevented by Jagannatha Reddy, who

66 Presentation or gift to the Nizam.

67 Book issued to each *Pattadar* in which land and land revenue payment particulars were entered.

68 S. W. File No. 93 of 1932 and Record No. 2326 of 1932.

69 Red and sandy soil in which *Telingana* abounds.

70 Term loosely used to designate a big landlord or *Deshmukh*.

71 24 seers make one *Kunda*. As it is measured with a pot-shaped container it is known so.

72 20 Maunds make one *putti*.



framed false cases and dragged them to courts. Consequently the ryots left their houses and fled as they could not resist the *Zamindar*.<sup>73</sup>

*Watandars* not only indulged in illegal collections and land-seizures, but also ranged themselves against developmental work undertaken by village upliftment societies.<sup>74</sup> One such society was formed at Morupalli village, in Jagtial Taluq of Karimnagar district in 1944 under the scheme of Rural Development. It was registered under Co-operative Societies Act and had taken up the works of digging manure trenches, forming drains and teaching principles of hygiene to the people. But the *Asaldar Mali* and *Police Patel* of the village, Venkateshwar Rao and his *Gumastha* Abdul Kareem announced that they would not allow the society to function in their village and started putting all types of hurdles. *Dheds*,<sup>75</sup> the members of the society were threatened with dire consequences and washermen were prevented from washing the cloths of the members of the society. Consequently, members got afraid and started going out of the society. When the matter was brought to the notice of the *First Talukdar* of Karimnagar through the Manager and Inspector of Co-operative Societies, Jagtial, he decided that the *Asaldar* should suffer permanently a cut off Rs. 5/- in his salary. When the Director of Co-operative Societies wrote to *Subedar* for taking stronger action against the concerned village officials, *Subedar* only wrote to *First Talukdar* of Karimnagar that the punishment given was not enough and a higher punishment should be given. But nothing was imposed by him. This was how the *Watandars*, using their influence with revenue, police and forest officials, had their full say in the village administration, even though their activities proved contrary to the interests of the villagers.

Sundry duties levied by *Watandars*, in an illegal and unscrupulous manner included various items like putting animals by force in *Doddi*<sup>76</sup> and collecting fine,<sup>77</sup> forcibly taking of goats at Dasara Festival<sup>78</sup> and collection of *Shadi*,<sup>79</sup> *Patti*,<sup>80</sup> collection of three annas per

73 *Meezan*, 26 March, 1946.

74 S.W. File No. 32 of 1944 and Record 31 of 1944.

75 Harijans or untouchables.

76 A four walled enclosure where the animals that trespassed the crop fields were kept.

77 S.W. File No. 2 of 1943 and Record No. 2553 of 1944.

78 Hindu festival in which meat eating is freely indulged in.

79 Duty for the performance of a marriage by a village official.

80 S.W. File No. 98 of 1932 and Record No. 456 of 1933.



## THE WATANDARS OF WARANGAL SUBAH

49

rupee of land revenue for contingencies, for the repair of canal @Rs.5/- per acre, *Sattemma ki Patti*<sup>81</sup> @Rs. 20/- per house, for going to Tirupati<sup>82</sup> @Rs. 2/- per head, to drive cholera disease @Rs. 1/- per hearth, Rs. 200/- for the repair of temple and Rs. 100/- to take out of the *babul trees*<sup>83</sup> out of *Mahsura*,<sup>84</sup> all of which were simply swallowed.<sup>85</sup> The list would go on rather unending. In short *Watandars* tried to satisfy each and every need of theirs through levies on the hapless. Though complaints of these excesses were registered by *Dheds*, *Dhangars*<sup>86</sup> etc., they were simply scored off on the ground that no one came forward to substantiate before the enquiry officer<sup>87</sup> which they could not do for the obvious reason that they were afraid of the terror that would befall them at the hands of the masters the moment the enquiry was over.

The conduct of village officials regarding the levy and purchase of foodgrains and their extraction of *Vetti* or forced labour brought great hardship on all sections of the village population. To begin with, false entries of lands under wet and food grain cultivation were made by *Patwaris* for pecuniary gains.<sup>88</sup> This resulted in greater hardship being imposed on those innocent cultivators who did not indulge in this manoeuvre, as the deficiency in the quota was tried to be made good from them. Besides strict collection of levy grain, compulsory grain purchases under the *Khush Kharidi* system<sup>89</sup> were made from both small and big farmers. Though it was supposed to be voluntary purchase, collections were made forcibly, even from ryots that cultivated below two acres under *Tabi*.<sup>90</sup> But the crux of the problem lay in the fact that the vast grain surpluses that were there with *Patels*, *Patwaris* and *Deshmukhs* were not requisitioned and hence the burden fell so heavily on middle and small

81 Duty collected to celebrate festival in honour of village goddess by name *Sattemma*.

82 Pilgrim centre in Chittoor district of Andhra where Lord Venkiteswara's temple is situated.

83 Thorny trees which are known for their timber and gum.

84 Reserve Forest.

85 S. W. File No. 24 of 1945 and Record No. 907 of 1945.

86 Washermen.

87 S. W. *op.cit.*, File No. 2 of 1943 and Record No. 2553 of 1944.

88 S. W. File Nos. 71 of 1920 Record No. 786 of 1942; File No. 119 of 1930 and Record No. 1272 of 1931; Office of the Director-General of Revenue. *Telingana*, File No. 17 of 1925 and Record No. 55 of 1947.

89 Voluntary purchase.

90 Wet crop grown in winter season.



farmers that very little grain remained for their subsistence or personal needs after levy and purchase grain was given.<sup>91</sup> With great persuasion 250 *pallas*<sup>92</sup> of paddy was collected under purchase from the *Deshmukh* of Atmakur village in Warangal Taluq<sup>93</sup> in 1946. The amount of stocks that lay with big farmers could be imagined from this. Besides the rigours of the levy and purchase collection, the ryots were made to complain many a time against the *Patwaris* for the non-payment of levy grain amount. These amounts were swallowed by the *Patwaris* and consequently ryots failed to receive payment for the grain surrendered by them several months before.<sup>94</sup> Ryots could receive payment only after their complaints were enquired into and decided, which, with the usual procedure of appeals, took several months.

Though *begar*<sup>95</sup> was prohibited in the Dominions through Revenue Department's Circular No. 7 of 1927, still Revenue and Forest officers including village officials extracted forced and unpaid labour from *balotadars* and even from middle and small farmers.<sup>96</sup> Touring officials like *Girdavars*,<sup>97</sup> *Tahsildars* etc., besides taking *barbadari* work<sup>98</sup> from *balotadars*, collected sundry items like firewood, maize, goats etc., usually free of cost and if at all payment was ever made, it was quite nominal.<sup>99</sup> But, more than this, the *Vetti* extracted by *Patels*, *Patwaris*, *Deshmukhs* and *Deshpandyas* was far-fetched and more oppressive in character. This was very much a general levy on all the smaller villagers — occupants, tenants and labourers as such. No payment was made, no notice was given and there was no limit to the amount of work that might be extracted. The ostensible justification offered in such cases appeared to be that the ancestors of the concerned landlord or *Deshmukh* enjoyed this privilege on the ancestors of the families oppressed at present. Though local authorities were aware of the continuance of this kind of *Vetti* through the complaints that reached them, yet no relief

91 *Meezan*, 9 September, 1944.

92 100 Kgms make one palla.

93 S. W. File No. 16 of 1946 and Record No. 69 of 1947.

94 S.W. File Nos, 30 of 1945 and Record No. 6 of 1948; File No.43 of 1948 and Record No. 2272 of 1948; *Meezan*, 10 October, 1945.

95 Unpaid and forced labour.

96 S. W. Confidential File No. 18 of 1942 and Record No. 6 of 1946.

97 Revenue Inspectors.

98 Coolie and attender work.

99 *Meezan*, 5 October, 1945; 11 August, 1946.



had been provided to the oppressed.<sup>100</sup> Prohibition of *begar* had no effect on these big *Watandars* as its violation entailed little censure or punishment at the hands of the government. This could well be gleaned from the fact that even as late as 1946 persons were beaten for not bringing fire-wood to be sent to *Tahsildar* or for not attending to sowing work in the *paddy* field or *Patwari*.<sup>101</sup> Only the change of government two years later could bring a sigh of relief to the oppressed.

It is thus evident that the activities of *Watandars* touched all aspects of the rural scene. The hereditary nature of their *Watans* and the vast amount of concentration of land, wealth and rights that went with them made them virtually monarchs in their respective realms. The various excesses or exploitations in which they indulged in, were either ignored or given nominal punishment to soothe the enfeebled. The *Watandars* in turn attended to the comforts and conveniences of higher officials of the government. When *Subedar* was in the habit of receiving loans from a *Deshmukh*,<sup>102</sup> it naturally acted as a leverage for the landlord to perpetrate atrocities that suited his interests. Further, loyalty to the regime and faithful espousal of its policies especially, when its strength and stability were involved, was considered as the main attribute of *Watandars* and as long as they fulfilled this condition, other things appeared to have been ignored. But the discontent, frustration and fear among the masses that were aggrieved and exploited by these big *Watandars* was so deep-rooted and heart burning that they could neither forget it nor were they allowed to. Hence, when political exigencies coupled with economic discontent culminated in the Telangana upheaval of 1946-51, the main axe of popular wrath fell on the *Deshmukhs*, *Patels*, *Parwaris*<sup>103</sup> and their bastions.<sup>104</sup> Though posts of village officials of by-gone days are continued in the present, they have been divested of their former rights and privileges and are simply allowed to bask in the sunshine of their former glory and greatness.

100 S. Kesava Iyengar, *Economic Investigations in the Hyderabad State*, Vol.III (Warangal District), Govt. Central Press: Hyderabad Division, 1932, p.13.

101 *Meezan*, 10 and 11 August, 1946.

102 S.W File No. 192 of 1946 and Record Nos. 18 of 1947.

103 P. Sundarayya, *Telingana People's Struggle and its Lessons*, Calcutta, 1972, pp. 418-419.

104 Residences of big *Watandars*, known as *gadis* resembled forts in their structure and strength.







## Nature of Political Relationship between the Residents and Shah Akbar II

BY

GOURI SANKAR MUKHERJEE

In the present article an attempt has been made on the one hand, to examine the whole complex of the relationship between the Mughals and the British Residents in their mutually repellent interests and, on the other, to remove certain misconceptions about the nature of their relationship. The British Residency at Delhi was set up in 1803. The most important duty of the Resident at that time was the management of British relations with the Mughal emperor. In maintaining British relations with the emperor the Resident had to work under the direct guidance of the Governor-General. But, at the same time, it was the Resident who implemented governmental decisions touching the affairs of the Mughal. There was not much he could do in matters concerning the Mughal emperor in his official capacity, but he could play a crucial role in the formulation and execution of British policy towards the Mughal emperor.

The maintenance of law and order in the royal palace was among others, a tough and complicated problem for the Resident. Immediately after Shah Alam II's death in 1806, the Resident got the information that Mirza Izzut Buksh, the second son of Shah Alam II, would contest the title to the throne against his elder brother, Mirza Akbar Shah. Obviously, the Resident, D. Ochterlony scented danger and took precautionary measures.<sup>1</sup>

During the reign of Shah Akbar II, the Mughal emperor, the royal palace was a hot-bed of villainy, conspiracy and debauchery.<sup>2</sup> Mirza Jahangir, His Majesty's third son, was always fomenting trouble in the palace by infringing the code of sanctity and laws and adopted an inimical attitude towards Abu Zafar, the eldest son of the

<sup>1</sup> Secret Consultations, 11 December, 1806, No.1.

<sup>2</sup> T. W. Kaye, *The Life and Correspondence of Charles, Lord Metcalfe*, Vol. I, (London, 1858), p. 344.



emperor. The prince belittled Abu Zafar before the public<sup>3</sup> because the British were determined to acknowledge his elder brother as the heir-apparent. The disgruntled prince, accompanied by his insolent and unruly companions, even went to the length of threatening the security of Mumtaz Mahal, his mother.<sup>4</sup> In 1809, Jahangir created a violent disturbance in the palace when he forcibly tried to get through the palace gates. Seton, the Resident, was also recklessly assaulted.<sup>5</sup> In his firm bid to preserve peace and tranquillity in the palace, Seton ordered that the palace-gate were to be guarded by British troops, and disbanded Jahangir's *risalah*.<sup>6</sup> The Resident also proposed that British troops should be posted<sup>7</sup> at the gates outside the royal palace, and in the interior they were to be substituted by the nazibs.<sup>8</sup> It can be maintained that the Resident's plan to station the British troops at each of the palace gates was nothing but an attempt to interfere with the internal affairs of His Majesty. But official records would reveal that this was by no means the whole truth. The emperor desired that the gates of the palace should be guarded by British troops,<sup>9</sup> and felt that this arrangement would bring immense benefit to his family. It is interesting to note that the British troops stationed at the palace gates enjoyed his confidence more than his own body-guards.<sup>10</sup>

After the above incident, the Resident planned to separate the recalcitrant prince from his parents for obvious reasons.<sup>11</sup> But the prince became so violent under the influence of his evil associates that the Resident was constrained to change the above plan.<sup>12</sup> Ultimately, the prince was removed to Allahabad on the Resident's recommendation. The palace would have been the fittest place for the prince if he was surrounded by the emperor's body-guards. Even so,

3 Political Consultations (Henceforth abbreviated as Pol. Cons.) 17 June, 1809, No. 1.

4 Letters to the Court (Secret), 19 October, 1809.

5 The paper of intelligence at Delhi, 21 July, 1809 which stated fully the origin and development of the tumult excited by Jahangir. I. H. R. C., 1955.

6 *Risalah*: Body of armed retainers.

7 Secret Separate Consultations, 15 August, 1809, No. 51. (Hereafter abbreviated as Sec. Sep. Cons.)

8 Nazibs: A body of irregular infantry; His Majesty's body guards.

9 Sec. Sep. Cons., 8 August, 1809, No. 2.

10 *Ibid.*, No. 1.

11 *Ibid.*, No. 8.

12 Sec. Sep. Cons., 15 August, 1809, No. 49.



the environment of the palace with all its disgusting features was likely to tempt the prince to the path of ruin.<sup>13</sup>

It is very difficult to endorse the view that the Resident, by recommending Jahangir's removal, had wounded His Majesty's feeling and hurt His Majesty's sentiments. From official records it can be gathered that the emperor himself approved of this extraordinary measure because he was convinced that its effects would be beneficial to Jahangir.<sup>14</sup> The emperor felt that Jahangir and the prince's disorderly associates had already threatened his authority.<sup>15</sup> Even Mumtaz Mahal, His Majesty's favourite wife, observed that the separation was absolutely necessary for the benefit of the members of the royal family, and asked the Resident to treat the prince like a brother.<sup>16</sup> Meanwhile, the prince regained mental discipline,<sup>17</sup> and his conduct changed radically during his stay in Allahabad.<sup>18</sup> On the Resident's suggestion, the Governor-General wrote to the emperor that Jahangir could return home on giving an assurance of future good conduct.<sup>19</sup> Accordingly, the emperor drew up an agreement, laying down conditions which the prince would be required to fulfil before quitting Allahabad and communicated this information to Jahangir.<sup>20</sup>

The return of his beloved son Jahangir eased His Majesty's mind<sup>21</sup> and soothed Mumtaz Mahal's feelings.<sup>22</sup> Unfortunately, after his arrival, the prince and his band of hooligans continued to vitiate the serene atmosphere in the palace owing to his father's indulgence, and the British Government had no other alternative but to send the prince back to Allahabad. But official records make it quite clear that the Government took this step after consulting His Majesty.<sup>23</sup> Further, the emperor came to realise that indulgence shown to Jahangir was unjustified and so stopped all encouragements shown to his vile associates.<sup>24</sup>

13 *Ibid.*, No. 51.

14 Sec. Sep. Cons., 3 October, 1809, No.3.

15 Sec. Sep. Cons., 15 August, 1809, No. 53.

16 Sec. Sep. Cons., 29 August, 1809, No. 36.

17 Letters from the Court, (Pol), 26 August, 1810.

18 Pol. Cons., 29 May, 1810, No.79.

19 Pol. Cons., 14 July, 1810, No.21.

20 Pol. Cons. 11 February, 1813, No. 6.

21 Pol. Cons., 15 August, 1810, No.37.

22 Pol. Cons., 14 July, 1810, No.22.

23 Pol., Cons., 10 January, 1812, No.87.

24 Pol. Cons., 29 May, 1810. No.79.



Even he went to the extent of castigating the ladies of the Imperial Harem who encouraged Jahangir to indulge in excesses.<sup>25</sup> However, the emperor appealed to the Resident for uprooting the seeds of mutual jealousy existing between the two rival princes by removing Jahangir from the palace.<sup>26, 27</sup>

Tension was prevailing in the palace area when B. Martin assumed charge of the Residency office in 1830. Although the chance of violence was less, yet the court's atmosphere was vitiated by Salim, a youngman of head-strong temper and the favourite son of the King. This bold and fanatic youth and Sohanlal, His Majesty's Mookhtyar,<sup>28</sup> were nursing a deep hostility towards Abu Zafar and trying to nominate their own candidate to the post of the commandant of the palace guards and Pay Master.<sup>29</sup> Official documents do reveal that Salim was being assisted by the royal troops against his elder brother, Abu Zafar.<sup>30</sup> Although the situation in the royal palace was tense, yet the Resident could not intervene as he was instructed by the Governor-General not to interfere in the affairs of the emperor, either personal or political in nature.

During Shah Akbas II's period, the questions regarding the royal stipend, dignity and sovereignty considerably strained his relations with the British Residents. Besides, Shah Akbar II's policy of pressing his claims on the British Government through several missions was also decidedly opposed by the British Residents for obvious reasons.<sup>31</sup> There were also other matters which caused friction between the Mughal and the Resident. In 1805, Seton, the Resident noticed with concern and alarm that the emperor under the influence of

25 Letters to the Court (Sec.), 19 October, 1809.

26 Pol. Cons., 16 July, 1813, No. 52.

27 Pol. Cons., January, 1812, No. 88. In 1819, the Resident pleaded for Jahangir's short visit to Delhi. But the Governor-General turned down the Resident's proposal as Jahangir's arrival might threaten the peace and security of the palace. Political Proceedings, 14 August, 1820, Nos. 14 and 15.

28 Mookhtyar: Chief Adviser of the king; Law Officer.

29 Foreign Miscellaneous, Resident to the Secretary, 20 January, 1822. (Hereafter abbreviated as For Misc).

30 For. Misc., Chief Secretary to the Government to the Secretary to the Governor-General, 20 February, 1832.

31 Shah Akbar II sent two missions to Calcutta, the mission of Shah Haji and that of Raja Prankissen, and another one to England, the mission of Ram Mohan Roy.



the ladies, particularly at the request of Zeb-Ul-nissa Begum, his aunt, granted the royal sanads<sup>32</sup> to their favourites in his assigned territories. The Resident promptly reminded the emperor of the Government decision that the lands in question should not be delivered to the parasites of the emperor.<sup>33</sup> As such, the Resident urged the emperor to cancel the grants. But the emperor was impatient and asked the Governor-General in a Shukka,<sup>34</sup> that his aunt was in need of a piece of land in the assigned territory, for which necessary sanction might be accorded.<sup>35</sup> The Resident tried to persuade him not to make this demand as he was sure that the Governor-General would not entertain such an application.<sup>36</sup>

During the tenure of his service in the Residency office, Seton discovered the two letters produced by Haji Mohammed Mohsen, the royal favourite of Shah Alam II, from the Turkish Government to the Mughal Court for driving away Wahabis from Medina—a proposal which was likely to evoke interest in the British circle. The Resident was always suspicious of Haji and wanted to dislodge him from royal favour. But the adamant emperor gave protection to Haji.<sup>37, 38</sup>

Shah Akbar II was extremely unhappy to know of the Resident's attitude towards him and finally a written complaint was lodged with the E. I. Company's authorities against Seton by the King with a request to replace him by a more helpful and least interfering Resident.<sup>39</sup> But the successive Residents did not toe His Majesty's line of action on many issues. The question of slave trade was a case in point. The Resident vehemently opposed His Majesty's inhuman policy of importing slaves from abroad. C. T. Metcalfe, the Resident advised the Governor-General not to approve of this business.<sup>40</sup> At last, Lord Moira stopped this trade for good on the recommendation of A. Ross the Resident.<sup>41</sup>

32 Sanad : A Royal Grant.

33 Political Proceedings, 15 February, 1806, Nos. 6 and 10. (Henceforth abbreviated as Pol. Pro.)

34 Shukka : Royal Message; letter or an application sent by a ruler to his subjects.

35 Pol. Cons., 31 October, 1808, No. 65.

36 *Ibid.*, No. 64.

37 *Ibid.*, No. 66.

38 Pol. Cons., 26 July 1811, Nos. 25 and 26.

39 Minto Papers, VIII, King to the Resident, 29 July, 1811.

40 Pol. Cons., 12 March, 1813, No. 47.

41 Letters from the Court (Pol.), 30 October, 1814; Pol. Pro., 9 August, 1822, Nos. 18 and 19.



In the first half of the nineteenth century the Resident decisively thwarted His Majesty's attempts to augment the royal stipend and restore imperial privileges with the help of any other country power. In 1811, C. T. Metcalfe, the Resident got hold of some papers from Lucknow which gave the impression that Qudsia Begum<sup>42</sup> was involved in a clandestine transaction with Bhow Begum, the Queen of Oudh.<sup>43</sup> But the emperor and his mother pleaded that the alleged letters were written without their knowledge.<sup>44</sup> Farther, the emperor was distressed to know that the letters contained all sorts of allegations against the British officers.<sup>45</sup> The Governor-General informed the emperor through the Resident that His Majesty's corrupt advisers always entertained unjust suspicions about the motives and intentions of the British Government.<sup>46</sup> In 1811, another clandestine mission known as the Prankissen mission also ended in a dismal failure owing to the exertions of the Resident.

During the second quarter of the nineteenth century, it had been reported that the king of Delhi opened negotiations with some of the native princes in utmost secrecy.<sup>47</sup> In 1834, Metcalfe, the Delhi Agent,<sup>48</sup> urged the Governor-General to admonish the emperor for his illicit and secret correspondence with the Nizam.<sup>49</sup>

The Agent further alleged that His Majesty accepted presents from the Nizam without soliciting his approval.<sup>50</sup> During this time, the emperor also opened a clandestine correspondence with the Raja of Bikaner for the sale of royal title and dress.<sup>51</sup> The agent urged the Governor-General to take stern measures against the emperor if such clandestine practice continued unchecked.<sup>52</sup>

When the emperor was apprised of his correct transaction with the

42 Qudsia Begum was the mother of Shah Akbar II.

43 Pol. Cons., 6 August, 1812, No. 85.

44 *Ibid.*, No. 86.

45 *Ibid.*, No. 85.

46 Letters to the Court (Pol.), 26 August, 1810.

47 Pol. Pro., 14 July, 1834, Nos. 13-15.

48 By this time, Agency was established and the Residency abolished.

49 Ootacamund Pol Cons., 15 August, 1834, No. 29 (Henceforth abbreviated as Oot. Pol. Cons.).

50 Oot. Pol. Cons., 9 October, 1834, Nos. 44 and 45.

51 Pol. Pro., 27 February, 1833, No. 18.

52 Oot. Pol., Cons., 15 August, 1834, No. 31.



native chiefs of Hindustan, he pleaded his ignorance and informed the Governor-General through the Agent that some interested persons made an indiscriminate use of the Royal Seal<sup>53</sup> without his written approval.<sup>54</sup> He solemnly promised that the Royal Seal was to be broken and a new seal was to be engraved in the presence of the Delhi Agent in future.<sup>55</sup> Henceforth, the emperor became extremely cautious in his dealings and carried on negotiations with the protected Sikh chiefs with the consent of the British Agent.<sup>56</sup> At last the emperor was compelled to choose such a line of action by the persuasion of the Agent.

Thus we know from the records stated above that the British Residents and the Agents, by their policies and actions often injured His Majesty's feelings and their relationship became considerably strained on several occasions. But official documents also reveal that the British Residents and Agents respected His Majesty's mind. A. Seton (1906-1810) the Resident, always held the emperor in veneration and respect and sought to remove His Majesty's mental affliction and embarrassment in various ways.<sup>57</sup> He visited the royal durbar and met the members of the royal family every day.<sup>58</sup> Even he appeared for an audience before the Queen who always admonished him and addressed him as her servant.<sup>59</sup> Seton was found to be equally obliging the royal favourites by forwarding their letters to the Governor-General<sup>60</sup> although they were not the well-wishers of the Government.<sup>61</sup> In his Royal Shukka, the emperor admitted<sup>62</sup> that C. T. Metcalfe, Seton's successor, rendered yeoman's service to the royal cause.<sup>63</sup> After the abolition of the Delhi mint in 1818, the Resident urged the Governor-General to grant compensatory allowances to the employees of the mint. Obviously, Metcalfe's considerate attitude

53 Pol. Pro., 19 February, 1883, No. 15.

54 *Ibid.*

55 Pol. Pro., 21 November, 1834, No. 136.

56 Letters to the Court (Pol.), 30 September, 1831, para. 6.

57 Letters from the Court (Pol.), 30 September, 1831, para. 8.

58 Sec. Sep. Cons., 8 August, 1809, No. 50.

59 E. Thompson, *Life of Charles Metcalfe* (London, 1937) p. 139.

60 For. Misc., Letter from the Resident, 21, December, 1810.

61 *Ibid.*, From the Resident, 25 December, 1810.

62 Pol. Pro., 14 November, 1819, No. 3.

63 *Ibid.*



towards the poor employees of the mint impressed His Majesty.<sup>64</sup> Metcalfe also pressed for issuing coins in the name of the emperor each year in order to commemorate His Majesty's accession anniversary.<sup>65</sup> D. Ochterlony's (1818-1822) loyal service and good gesture pleased His Majesty to a considerable extent and gratified his feelings.<sup>66</sup> In 1820, a considerable amount of treasure had been unearthed on the bank of the river Jamuna. The emperor was extremely happy to know that the Governor-General decided that the discovered treasure should be deposited with the royal treasury.<sup>67</sup> The Governor-General took this decision on the Resident's suggestion.<sup>68</sup>

The Resident carefully avoided doing anything which would cause pecuniary loss to His Majesty. In 1822, Nuckee Alee Khan<sup>69</sup> claimed the sum of Rupees 69,000 as his salary with arrears from the treasury of the Delhi palace household<sup>70</sup> and demanded the Governor-General's intervention in this matter.<sup>71</sup> At last, A. Ross, the Delhi Resident (1822-23) advised the Governor-General to pay Nuckee Alee his salary with arrears from the British Treasury.<sup>72</sup> The Resident also authorised His Majesty to dispose of any property belonging to any member of the royal family after the demise of its owner.<sup>73</sup> At the same time, the Government might purchase any royal property with His Majesty's consent, and on the Resident's advice, the Government decided that the monetary compensation offered by the Government was to be added to the royal income.<sup>74</sup> In 1828, E. Colebrooke, the Resident proposed that the emperor should be permitted to purchase any piece of territory and the entire expenditure would be borne by the Company's treasury.

64 Pol. Pro., 13 March, 1819, No. 38.

65 Pol. Pro., 13 March, 1819, Nos. 36 and 37.

66 Pol. Pro., 9 February 1819, Nos. 99 and 100.

Ochterlony's attitude towards the king is also reflected in an article published by P. T. Nair in the *Statesman* (29 September, 1969).

67 Pol. Pro., 5 February, 1820, No. 12.

68 *Ibid.*, No. 13.

69 Nuckee Alee Khan was the manager of the household of Mirza Jahangir.

70 Pol. Pro., 31 May, 1822, No. 18.

71 *Ibid.*, No. 19.

72 *Ibid.*, No. 20 and 21.

73 Pol. Pro., 1 February, 1828, No. 13.

74 Pol. Pro., 19, October, 1827. Nos. 20 and 21.



The Governor-Governor approved of this proposal.<sup>75, 76</sup> But in 1833, W. Fraser, the Agent, took a different stance when an influential Delhian complained that the emperor had refused to repay his debt. Naturally, the Agent recommended that the amount of debt should be cleared by the emperor<sup>77</sup> and it should be recovered from the tyool land.<sup>78</sup> But Lord Bentinck, the Governor-General, did not reverse his earlier stand and rejected the Agent's recommendation.<sup>79</sup>

The Resident felt that the realisation of the revenue of the emperor's territory was essential for His Majesty's financial interest. In 1823, the King sought the help of the British authorities against the disloyal Zamindars who refused to pay the royal tribute.<sup>80</sup> The Resident could not disavow His Majesty's claim to requisition aid of the British army against the rebel landlords.<sup>81</sup> So the Resident suggested that the British forces should be sent to help the King's revenue collectors employed in the management of the royal tyool lands.<sup>82</sup> Consequently, the Governor-General instructed Elliot, the Resident, to adopt appropriate measures against the refractory Zamindars.<sup>83</sup> In 1825, the Resident advised the Governor-General to sanction money for creating several houses for the benefit of His Majesty at Sahadra at Delhi.<sup>84</sup>

The foregoing analysis will show that the British Residents endeavoured to improve His Majesty's pecuniary condition and in formulating such a policy they were prompted by human consideration. But actually, their purpose was to prevent the emperor from clamouring for an augmentation of the royal stipend on the plea of an acute financial crisis.

75 Pol. Pro., 14 March, 1828, No. 5.

76 *Ibid.*, No. 6.

77 Pol. Pro., 1 February, 1825, No. 5.

78 Certain territories belonging to His Majesty or the members of the royal family.

79 Pol. Pro., 1 February, 1825, No. 10-11.

80 Pol. Pro., 31 July, 1823, No. 44.

81 *Ibid.*, No. 45.

82 *Ibid.*

Also Jam-i-Jahan Numa (henceforth abbreviated as Jam etc.) 9 February, 1825.

This Persian weekly started in December 1828 and continued to be published till 1828.

83 Jam etc., 21 September, 1825.

84 Jam etc., 18 May, 1825.



In several other ways too, the Residents tried to oblige His Majesty and strengthen their ties of friendship with the Mughal emperor. In 1811, Holkar threw off his yoke of allegiance to the House of Timur and struck coins in his own name. The old and effete emperor had neither the means nor the courage to thwart the designs of Holkar. That being so, the emperor made pathetic appeals to the Governor-General through the Resident for assisting him against the rebel Maratha Chief. On the Resident's recommendations, the Governor-General reprimanded Holkar, forbade him to commit such an act of defiance in future and informed Holkar that the British would uphold the glorious tradition of the House of Timur.<sup>85</sup>

In 1814, a dispute arose between the King and Abu Zafar, the heir-apparent regarding the receipt of allowances.<sup>86</sup> In order to respect His Majesty's intention, the Resident proposed that the prince must give the receipt of his own allowance and a portion of it would be preserved in the custody of the King.<sup>87</sup> The Resident took offence at the prince's attitude towards his father when he received a complaint from His Majesty that the prince was trying to extort an increase of allowance from the royal treasury.<sup>88</sup> In 1814, on the Resident's suggestion, the Governor-General permitted Shah Haji, the royal favourite to return to the Imperial Court although the latter incurred the Governor-General's wrath and was expelled from the royal palace in 1808.<sup>89,90</sup> The Resident also decided that after the demise of Qudsia Begum, the Queen Mother, Shah Akbar II would manage and control her territories.<sup>91,92</sup> In pursuance of this policy, the Resident requested the Governor-General to reject an appeal of Rufa-ul-nissa Begum, His Majesty's sister, for occupying a piece of territory which she inherited from her mother.<sup>93</sup> It was further resolved that only the King was competent to use the term *paishcush*<sup>94</sup> in his receipts for stipends under the Royal Seal.<sup>95</sup>

85 Letters from the Court (Pol.), 20 April, 1811.

86 Letters to the Court (Pol.), 31 March, 1814.

87 Pol. Cons., 21 January, 1814, No. 2.

88 *Ibid.*

89 Pol. Cons., 27 September, 1814, No. 39.

90 Pol. Cons., 4 October, 1814, No. 17.

91 Pol. Cons., 7 June, 1817, No. 98.

92 Pol. Cons., 21 January, 1814, No. 2.

93 Letters to the Court (Pol.), 2 April, 1832, para, 72.

94 *Paishcush* : Tribute from a subordinate power; Tax.

95 Pol. Pro., 13 November, 1829, No. 60.



In order to cultivate His Majesty's goodwill, the Resident informed the emperor that the Government would exert its influence to mitigate his hardship and not tolerate anyone questioning His Majesty's authority in the royal territory.<sup>96</sup> In 1835, the people of Ulwar in the assigned territory constructed a bund without soliciting His Majesty's approval. On the recommendation of the Resident the Governor-General demolished the bund.<sup>97, 98</sup> Even the Resident carefully guarded the interests of the royal servants and further assured the emperor that any British officer found guilty of slighting the prestige of any royal servant<sup>99, 100</sup> would be punished.<sup>101, 102</sup> Even the Resident was liable to be removed from the Residency office if he incurred the King's displeasure and failed to satisfy His Majesty's mind. Thus in 1911, Minto effected Seton's dismissal in deference to His Majesty's wishes.<sup>103</sup> He notified to the King the appointment of a new Resident accordingly.<sup>104</sup>

Despite His Majesty's hostile attitude, Seton, on the eve of his departure, requested the former to receive General Hewett with favour and confidence who might well be served as a link of communication between the King and the Governor-General.<sup>105</sup> In 1830, Francis Hawkins, the Resident was also dismissed for not respecting His Majesty's sentiment<sup>106</sup> although the former took umbrage at the treatment meted out to him by the emperor and the members of the royal family.<sup>107</sup>

No misunderstanding existed between the King and the Residents regarding some important issues. The Residents made it a policy not to interfere in the internal affair of the Begum which became an

96 For. Misc., Resident to the Secretary, 4 December, 1831.

97 Letters from the Court (Pol.) 7 October, 1835, para, 6.

98 Letters to the Court (Pol.) 1 May, 1835, para, 7.

99 Aina-i-Sikandar, 8 April, 1833.

This was another Persian weekly published during the Nineteenth Century.

100 *Ibid.*

101 *Ibid.*, 6 May, 1833; also 4 March, 1833.

102 For. Misc., Secretary to the Resident 3 January, 1830.

103 Minto Papers, VIII, King to the Resident, 29 July, 1811.

104 Pol. Cons., 9 March, 1811, Nos. 81-82.

105 Pol. Cons., 13 March, 1811, No. 115.

106 Pol. Cons., 8 January, 1830, No. 45.

107 Pol. Cons., 13 November, 1829, No. 13.



exclusive domain of His Majesty.<sup>108</sup> In 1825, C. Metcalfe, the Resident was posted with an intelligence through different sources that the members of the royal family were mercilessly treating the slave girls detained within the palace walls.<sup>109</sup> In 1828, Captain Grant, the British officer commanding the palace guards, informed the Resident through a despatch that a slave girl attempted to escape over the palace wall by getting down below the Jehroka<sup>110</sup> of the fort.<sup>111</sup> On the basis of the representation of the Captain, Resident asked him to keep the girl in his own custody and place her under safe surveillance.<sup>112</sup>

But Shah Akbar II took strong exception to this peremptory decision of the Resident and informed the latter that the British had nothing to do with the question of delivering the slave girl from the bondage of the royal house. Consequently, the Resident decided to return the girl to the royal custody<sup>113</sup> according to the Government instruction<sup>114</sup> and the decision of the Resident obviously pleased His Majesty.<sup>115</sup> At the same time, the emperor accepted the Resident's suggestion regarding the treatment to be meted out to the slave girls and royal orders were issued to the inmates of the palace to treat the female domestics compassionately.<sup>116</sup> In 1833, the King requested W. Fraser, the Delhi Agent to issue an instruction to Neave, the Pay Master, to disburse the amount of the royal stipend regularly on the first day of every month even if it was a Sunday or an established holiday.<sup>117</sup> Although Neave set forth his views and clearly stated that the payment of the stipend could not be made on the first day of every month,<sup>118</sup> yet the Resident complied with the King's request for respecting his sentiment.<sup>119</sup>

108 Jam etc., 11 May, 1825.

109 Jam etc., 8 September, 1825.

110 Jehroka: Curtain.

111 Pol., Pro., 31 December, 1828, No. 4.

112 *Ibid.*, Grant to Colebrooke, 5 December, 1828.

113 *Ibid.*, From the King, 11 December, 1828.

114 *Ibid.*

115 Pol. Pro., 7 November, 1829., No. 81.

116 *Ibid.*, King to the Resident, 26 December, 1828.

117 Pol. Pro., 6 June, 1833, No. 30-31.

118 Pol. Pro., 7 November, 1833, Nos. 19-20.

119 Letters to the Court (Pol.), 10 July, 1834, para. 119.



Thus the Governor-General and the Residents adopted the policy of treating the Mughal king with consideration and respect and carefully avoided to do anything which might produce uneasiness in His Majesty's mind.

But it would be wrong to suppose that they were guided by human consideration in adopting this policy. Actually, they wanted to prevent the other powers from exploiting His Majesty's name and authority by taking a considerate attitude towards the King.

Meanwhile, the problem of appointing competent and faithful officers in the management of the royal household cropped up during the reign of Shah Akbar II. Although the matter was connected with His Majesty's affairs, yet Seton, the Resident felt that joint policies in imperial affairs might be sponsored. So, Seton proposed that Ashraff Beg, a talented military leader and a man of integrity should hold the office of Naib Bukhshee.<sup>120</sup> <sup>121</sup> His Majesty agreed to the Resident's proposal. The King also accepted Seton's recommendation for appointing another outstanding officer, Hunsook Ray, treasurer in the administration of the Imperial Household.<sup>122</sup>

After Seton's departure, the King changed his policy of consulting the Resident in administrative matters and indulged in illegal appointments contrary to his previous policy.<sup>123</sup> But Metcalfe and D. Ochterlony, the successors of Seton did not like to interfere in any business which was related to His Majesty's durbar without the royal approbation.<sup>124</sup> In 1823, Ruknuddin, an unscrupulous man<sup>125</sup>,<sup>126</sup> was appointed Vakeel.<sup>127</sup> Moreover, Ruknuddin was also authorised by His Majesty to control financial affairs of the Royal Household.<sup>128</sup> Naturally

120 Naib Bukhshee: A Pay Master; also a Commander.

121 Pol. Pro., 3 October, 1823, No. 47.

Anarzee from the Resident to the King, 3 October, 1809.

122 *Ibid.*, King to the Resident, 3 October, 1809.

123 Pol. Pro., 3 October, 1823, No. 47.

Ashraff Beg's memorandum to Metcalfe, 16 July, 1816.

124 Pol. Pro., 9 August, 1822.

125 *Ibid.*, From Elliot to the King, 8 July, 1823.

126 *Ibid.*, Ochterlony, to the Queen, 1 March, 1821.

127 Vakeel: Representative of the King; the Royal Ambassador.

128 Pol. Pro., 3 October, 1823, No. 47.



Ashraff Beg, an officer of honesty and integrity resented the King's decision.<sup>129</sup> Even the royal collaterals complained that Ruknuddin was responsible for their misery and degradation.<sup>130, 131</sup> So it was quite natural that Elliot, the Delhi Agent, requested His Majesty not to elevate Ruknuddin to the rank and status of the Vakeel.<sup>132</sup> But the King in his despatch to the Acting Governor-General, Sir John Adam, vindicated his stand that he had taken regarding the appointment of Ruknudeen.<sup>133</sup> He also informed Elliot, the Agent, that he was impressed with the laudable qualities of Ruknuddin,<sup>134, 135</sup> and believed that the man of his choice was an officer with rare ability.<sup>136</sup> While justifying his stand, the King referred to a letter written by the Resident from Neemuch in 1820 which contained fulsome praise for Ruknuddin.<sup>137, 138</sup> At last, the Resident, being instructed by the Governor-General, decided that the King was at liberty to appoint officials of the Imperial Household.<sup>139</sup> C. T. Metcalfe, the next Resident, maintained status quo regarding this issue and accepted His Majesty's decision<sup>140, 141</sup> of nominating<sup>142</sup> Mirza Salim, the favourite prince to the post of Bukhshee Kool.<sup>143</sup>

In the meantime, Ashraff Beg died in 1832. By this time, the Agent suggested that Mehmood Khan, a conscientious officer should be selected as Ashraff Beg's successor.<sup>144</sup> But the King, under petticoat influence turned down the suggestion and told the Agent that all these were matters of his jurisdiction, matters in which no respectful man could tolerate interference from external sources.<sup>145</sup> Ultimately, a compromise was effected; it was agreed that the emperor should enjoy the power of appointing and dismissing officers of the Royal Household

129 *Ibid.*, Ashraff Beg to Elliot, 26 June, 1823.

130 Pol. Pro., 3 October, 1823, No. 48.

131 *Ibid.*, No. 49.

132 Pol. Pro., 9 August, 1822.

133 Pol. Pro., 3 October, 1823, No. 50.

134 *Ibid.*, No. 47.

135 Pol. Proc., 9 August, 1822.

136 *Ibid.*

137 *Ibid.*

138 Pol. Pro., 3 October 1823, No. 47.

139 Pol. Pro., 9 August, 1822.

140 Pol. Pro., 19 October, 1827, No. 22.

141 Pol. Pro., 1 February, Nos. 10-11.

142 *Ibid.*, No. 5.

143 Bukhshee Kool: Commander-in-Chief of the Army.

144 For. Misc. Resident to the Secretary, 25 January, 1832.

145 For. Misc., From the King, 23 January, 1832.



and the British Agent should not interfere in matters concerning His Majesty's domestic affairs.

Meanwhile, a very interesting case arose with regard to conflict of jurisdiction. In 1828, Raja Sohanlal, an important royal official had a case against one Daulat Ram, who, it was alleged, did not pay his debt to the King.<sup>146</sup> Consequently, Daulat Ram was placed under His Majesty's protective custody. Daulat Ram at the same time informed T. T. Metcalfe, the Judge and Magistrate at Delhi about the development, who, being impressed sent a chaprasee to Sohanlal to secure the release of Daulat Ram.<sup>147</sup> T. T. Metcalfe considered it objectionable to recognise His Majesty's power of detaining and releasing any reason without the knowledge and order of the British Court.<sup>148</sup> Sohanlal tried to defend his act by mentioning the cases of many defaulters in the past who were punished by the royal officials.<sup>149</sup> Nevertheless, he received an ultimatum from the British Judge who warned him not to perpetrate such a crime in future.<sup>150</sup> In his despatch to the Judge and Magistrate, Sohanlal observed that he did everything in obedience to His Majesty's order.<sup>151</sup> On receiving a complaint from His Majesty about the insolent conduct of the Judge, the Resident reprimanded T. T. Metcalfe and called for an explanation. T. T. Metcalfe submitted his explanation in which he informed the Resident that he sent a chaprasee to the palace because Sohanlal's recent activity was a flagrant violation of the British judicial authority.<sup>152</sup> At last, it was decided that if any inhabitant was placed under restraint and maltreated within the walls of the palace, the Resident would respectfully bring the case to the notice of His Majesty and act up to his wishes.<sup>153</sup>

From official records it can be maintained that Shah Akbar II, the Mughal, was favourably disposed towards the Governor-General and the Residents although their conflicting attitudes on several issues considerably strained the Anglo-Mughal political relations. The King equally reciprocated the gestures shown by the British Governors-General and the Residents. At this point, it will not be out of

146 Pol. Pro., 17 October 1828, No. 13, Enclosure 1 and 2.

147 *Ibid.*, Enclosure-4.

148 *Ibid.*, Encl. No. 5.

149 *Ibid.*, Encl. No. 6.

150 *Ibid.*, Encl., No. 7.

151 *Ibid.*, Encl., No. 8.

152 *Ibid.*

153 *Ibid.*, Encl., No. 5.



place to refer to the intricate political relations that existed between the Mughal and the British as reflected in the Kabul episode. In 1807, the Mughal emperor received a diplomatic letter through an agent of the Kabul King in a crowded durbār. In this despatch, the Mohammedan potentate of Kabul stated in uncertain terms that his troops would soon arrive for the purpose of overthrowing the Company's power in India.<sup>154,155</sup> The emperor maintained silence regarding this mission as he rightly felt that his correspondence with the King of Kabul might jeopardise the cordial relations existing between the Mughal and the British. Three years later, Shahzada Yunus, Timur Shah's grandson expressed his desire to visit Delhi<sup>156</sup> through Ochterlony, the British Agent at Ludhiana and the latter informed the Delhi Resident accordingly.<sup>157</sup> Regarding the proposed mission of Yunus, both the King and the British Resident endeavoured to prevent the Kabul prince from undertaking a journey from Kabul to Delhi which would be, to a great extent, perplexing to the King.<sup>158</sup> All these developments would show that the friendly exchanges between the King and the Governor-General and the Residents as discussed above were increasingly being maintained over the years through various intriguing political situations.

In order to consolidate his friendly relations with the Governor-General and the Residents and other British officers, Shah Akbar II, in 1810, was contemplating to present the Governor-General several rings,<sup>159</sup> which were offered usually to the distinguished personages, and gold mohurs and new coins<sup>160</sup> were sent to the Governor-General, Lord Minto in recognition of the interest which the latter had shown to the members of the royal family.<sup>161</sup> In 1813, the titles<sup>162</sup> were conferred on the British officials<sup>163,164</sup> and noteworthy recipients were Captain

154 Secret Consultations (To be abbreviated as Sec. Cons.), 26 February, 1807, No. 134.

155 *Ibid.*

156 Punjab Government Records, Vol. I.

Ochterlony to the Resident at Delhi, 18 October, 1810.

157 *Ibid.*, Seton to Ochterlony, 20 December, 1810.

158 *Ibid.*

159 For. Misc., From the Delhi Resident, 4 April, 1810.

160 For-Misc., From the same, 12 May, 1810.

161 For. Misc., From the same, 14 February, 1811.

162 For. Misc., From the same, 1 March, 1810.

163 For. Misc., From the same, 19 February, 1811.

164 Pol. Cons., 4 June, 1813, No. 19.



Macpherson, Captain Cunningham and Captain Ludlow. What was very striking was that the emperor presented some new coins bearing his superscription to the Governor-General which was scarcely done in the case of any other country power.<sup>165</sup> When Lord Moira was on a tour of the Upper Provinces in 1814, the emperor informed the Resident that if there was any meeting between the two, he would observe some etiquettes and grant some privileges to the Governor-General such as never was granted to any ruler not even to the members of the royal family.<sup>166</sup> In 1816, the emperor severed all connections with Shah Haji and Prankissen, the two erstwhile royal agents whose efforts to establish the status of the emperor as the sovereign power and augment the royal stipend were prevented by the Residents.<sup>167</sup> Surprisingly enough, the emperor in 1825, agreed to comply with the request of C. Metcalfe, the Resident and Commissioner for terminating the service of Ruknuddin. Consequently, the King dismissed Ruknuddin, his most trusted officer, and nominated Sohanlal to the post of the Royal Vakee and Manager of the Imperial Household.<sup>168</sup> Ruknuddin was also asked to submit all original papers concerning finance immediately<sup>169</sup> and what was interesting was that the king permitted the Resident to inspect all those papers.<sup>170, 171</sup> The Resident desired that His Majesty should distribute the entire amount of the royal stipend in small portions to all individuals<sup>172, 173</sup> in the Zenana.<sup>174</sup> The emperor acted in compliance with the Resident's wish and promptly ordered Sohanlal to do the needful.

165 Pol. Cons., 29 May, 1810, No. 210.

166 Letter received from the King, 11 January 1816. The proposed meeting fell through. But in 1816, the Governor-General stated in his letter to His Majesty that some royal officers duly waited on him and acknowledged the receipt of a royal sword belonging to His Majesty's ancestor Aurangzeb. Letter to the King (Received), 12 December, 1814.

167 Pol. Cons., 6 January, 1816, No. 20.

168 Jam etc., 9 February, 1825.

169 Jam etc., 22 June, 1825.

170 Jam etc., 23 February, 1825.

171 Jam etc., 4 May, 1825.

172 Jam etc., 28 March, 1825.

173 Jam etc., 28 April, 1825.

174 Zenana: Female Seraglio.



From the survey made above, it is clear that Shah Akbar II, wished to cement his relationship with the British Governors-General and the Residents by sanctioning some of their activities and accepting the Resident's recommendations on occasions. In formulating such a policy the emperor was guided by diplomacy and expediency. It was in the interest of the emperor to cultivate the Governor-General's goodwill and friendship through the medium of the Resident. During this period, many native powers openly defied His Majesty's authority. Disloyal lieutenants ceased to pay their royal tribute and had already adjured their ties of loyalty to the emperor. Even His Majesty's personal servants became restive and disobedient. The emperor felt that even in these exceedingly adverse circumstances, the Governors-General and the Residents could maintain the royal dignity and were eminently suited to bring successor to him. So, in order to please the East India Company's authorities, Shah Akbar II observed in his Shukkas that the British Governors General and the Residents were always attentive to his welfare to the minutest degree.<sup>175, 176</sup>

<sup>175</sup> Pol. Pro., 17 January, 1829, No. 5.

<sup>176</sup> Pol. Pro., 19 November, 1831, Nos. 22-23.



## Anglo-Burmese Diplomacy: September, 1823 to July 1824<sup>1</sup>

BY

G. P. RAMACHANDRA

### *Prelude:*

In order to understand British and Burmese policies during 1823-1824, at the time of the commencement of the first Anglo-Burmese War, one needs to know something of previous developments in Arakan and Assam. Once an independent Kingdom, Arakan was conquered by King Bodawpaya of Burma in 1785 — an event which resulted in a large scale emigration of Arakanese to neighbouring British Chittagong. These bitterly anti-Burmese immigrants in Chittagong launched three invasions of Arakan from British territory — in 1791, 1799 and 1811. While the first two caused much damage and loss of life, the last, led by a man called Chin Pyan resulted in a temporary occupation of Arakan. Chin Pyan was expelled by Burmese troops and he did not afterwards pose a real threat to the Burmese up till his death in 1815. Nevertheless, the episode poisoned Anglo-Burmese relations, for the Burmese had an understandable suspicion that the invasion had tacit British support. In fact, the British had practically no control over the portions of Chittagong inhabited by the Arakanese, or knowledge of what went on there. After Chin Pyan's death, a new threat to the Burmese appeared in the person of Hynja, the son of Keo Bang,

<sup>1</sup> No adequate account of the outbreak or the first Anglo-Burmese war exists at present. An article by L. Kitzan entitled Lord Amherst and the Declaration of War on Burma (*Journal of Asian Studies*), Wiesbaden, Vol. IX, 1975) has valuable insights, but is too brief, contains errors of fact and interpretation and is not concerned at all with the Burmese side of affair. A previous effort by the present writer, "The Outbreak of the First Anglo-Burmese Wars" (*The Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, December, 1978) showing that Burmese policy over Shahpuri was basically defensive and that the alleged Burmese invasion of 1824 was not an invasion at all, but owing to errors of interpretation on other points, and numerous errors of detail, it cannot serve as a definitive study; and even where it is correct, it is capable of improvement.



brother-in-law of the King of Arakan.<sup>2</sup> Keo Bang was allegedly executed after the Burmese conquest and Hynja taken to Burma as a prisoner. He was detained there for five or 6 years, and then set at liberty. He returned to Arakan, where he lived until Chin Pyan's rebellion broke out. This event posed dangers at Burmese hands for someone with Hynja's close ties with the old royal family of Arakan — for he might have become a focus for Arakanese Nationalist sentiment, which had suddenly revealed itself to be a formidable force, or might have been tempted to exploit such sentiment himself, given his royal connections. Hynja shifted therefore to British Chittagong, where he became a leader of the Arakanese refuge community and apparently developed political ambitions himself. In September, 1823, Lee Warner, the Magistrate of Chittagong, reported to the Calcutta Council that Hynja "... has a set of followers who talk of his again getting possession of his rights."<sup>3</sup> Further, in September 1825, after the outbreak of war with Burma, Thomas Campbell Robertson, then Political Agent in Chittagong, reported that Hynja desired to be made (by the British, who had recently conquered Arakan) the supreme ruler of the province. There were rumours at this time that Hynja, disappointed that the British had failed to make him ruler of Arakan, was intriguing with the Burmese, the former rulers of the province.<sup>4</sup> In pre-war days, the fact that Hynja was a claimant to the Arakan throne would have been deeply disturbing to the Burmese, in view of the three invasions of Arakan attempted by the exiles in Chittagong. There were also several other Arakanese leaders in Chittagong who were regarded as threats by the Burmese, though detailed information on them is lacking. A Burmese army which entered Chittagong in May, 1824, sought their surrender as well as Hynja's. Since the Burmese never got a chance to negotiate with the British, no full list of leaders was presented, but Hynja's name, and that of another leader, Rangjhang, were mentioned.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> For the following details on Hynja, See T. C. Robertson, *Political Incidents of the First Burmese War*, London, 1853, p. 16 *et seq.*

<sup>3</sup> Bengal Secret and Political Consultations (BSPC), 10 October, 1823, Lee Warner, Magistrate of Chittagong, to Swinton, Secretary, Secret and Political Department, No. 1.

<sup>4</sup> BSPC, 23 September, 1825, Robertson. Political Agent, to Swinton 1 September, and enclosed report.

<sup>5</sup> T. C. Robertson stated that Rangjhang was "a Mug [Arakanese] chief of some note as a warrior". Robertson, *op. cit.*, p. 39.



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Events in Assam between 1817 and 1822 also had an effect on the diplomacy of 1823-24. The Burmese intervened in Assam in 1817 to restore to the King the authority which had been usurped by his Chief Minister. They regarded Assam never forth as a protectorate — as seems to have been their practice in such situations. The British, uncomfortable at the extension of Burmese influence to a country neighbouring Bengal, the seat of their power in India, allowed Assamese dissidents in Bengal to stage armed incursions in Assam — unlike in 1811, when they had not been aware of Chin Pyan's plans for invading Arakan. The invasions failed but the Burmese were left angry and embittered, while British discomfort about a Burmese presence so close to Calcutta had not been dispelled. The Burmese in Assam were not of course a serious threat to the British but sudden incursions into Bengal, which could cause panic and confusion, seemed to be possible even if the long term consequences would have been disastrous for the Burmese. In any case, Assam seemed destined by geography to belong to whichever power dominated Bengal, and not to Burma.

It is against this background that one has to examine the chain of events which resulted in the outbreak of the First Anglo-Burmese War. The first of these occurred early in 1823, at the mouth of the Naf, an inlet of the sea separating the British Chittagong district from Arakan. The crew of a Burmese boat demanded a toll from boatload of Chittagong Arakanese near the island of Shahpuri lying at the entrance of the Naf. When their right to make the demand was questioned, a Burmese opened fire, killing one of the Arakanese.<sup>6</sup> The Magistrate of Chittagong, who was at first under the false impression that the incident was connected with the question of the ownership of Shahpuri, sent a detachment of Sepoys to the island on 6 February, to prevent the Burmese from seizing it. On 14 May, the Magistrate transmitted to the Calcutta Council a letter he had received from the Burmese Uchurung (official) at Maungdaw, the Burmese post opposite the British one at Tek Naf, near Shahpuri.

This letter showed that the Arakan Government had nothing to do with the killing. The Uchurung stated that the man responsible had unlawfully assumed the status of a local official and demanded money from Burmese subjects. These facts have been reported to the

<sup>6</sup> H. H. Wilson, *Documents Illustrative of the Burmese War*, Calcutta, 1827, No. 16.



Arakan Myowun, or Governor, who had sent for the person in question; but the latter had reportedly fled to British territory with his followers. The Uchurung urged the Magistrate to seize them if it was possible.

But the letter also contained an urgent request for the removal of the force from Shahpuri. "...the Kaja (Myowun) of this country (Arakan) placed the island of Shahpuree under my jurisdiction."<sup>7</sup> There had never been any quarrel over Shahpuri, the Myowun went on, which could only mean that the force had been stationed there on account of the intrigues of the Darogah (police officer) and the Arakanese immigrant chiefs of Tek Naf. The idea that British actions were inspired by others — usually identified as Arakanese immigrants — was a current motif in Burmese correspondence in this period; they could not account for what seemed to them to be the sudden aggressiveness of the British in any other way. The British were warned of the dangers of taking advice from the immigrants. "The Mugs (Arakanese,) of Arakan who live under government protection are great villains and bad people; the two countries are at peace; if you attend to what the Mugs say, it will not be well and on the receipt of this letter, order the sepoys to be withdrawn from the island of Shahpuree." If this was not done, it would be reported to the "Rajah (Myowun) of Pegue and Judge [Myowun?] of Arrakan and the event will not be good."<sup>8</sup> The British replied, asserting their right to Shahpuri.

The evidence in the British records certainly showed that the British had believed the island to be theirs. It was granted to two Arakanese by the local British Collector in 1790; it was measured for the first time in 1801; in 1802, it was included in a lease granted to a local landowner; it was measured again in 1815; and was measured for a third time in 1819. The measurements in question differed widely; 20 acres in 1801, 202 in 1815 and 30 in 1819. In spite of being leased out, the island had remained uncultivated.<sup>9</sup>

The Burmese, however, always insisted that Shahpuri was part of Arakan; they claimed that this had been so even in the days of the independent kingdom of Arakan. Their assertions are so vehement

<sup>7</sup> Bengal Political Consultations (BPC), 6 June, 1823, Extract from Judicial Proceedings, Lee Warner to Bayley, Chief Secretary, 14 May, enclosed letter.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Wilson, *op.cit.*, No. 149.



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and so consistent that they are convincing. The Burmese protestations apart, there was evidence to show that they too had treated the island as their territory. As shown earlier, the Uchurung at Maungdaw stated that the Myowun Arakan placed Shahpuri under his jurisdiction. This seemed to refer to some decree specifically investing the Uchurung with authority over Shahpuri. Two other things should be borne in mind. Firstly, the Chittagong Arakanese had never attempted to cultivate land on Shahpuri or build huts on it. Further, in November, 1823, the Burmese disclosed that the Uchurung at Maungdaw had been issuing permits to Arakanese and Muslims who wished to take cattle to Shahpuri for grazing. The people in question were undoubtedly from Chittagong, since the channel between Chittagong and Shahpuri was formidable at low tide but not the one between Arakan and Shahpuri. This showed not only that the Burmese had been treating the island as theirs but that their authority over Shahpuri had been acknowledged by the British subjects.

The British attached significance to the fact that Shahpuri lay closer to their side of the Naf — but this was a western criterion which was not necessarily meaningful for the Burmese. It is interesting to note that a deputy sent by the Burmese general Maha Bandula in January, 1824 to investigate the Shahpuri dispute inspected the island (actually spending some time there) and in the words of the Myowun of Arakan: "saw the [island] that it was within the dominions of the Sultan of Ava."<sup>10</sup> It is unclear what provided him to get convinced that Shahpuri was Burmese, but the fact that the island was closer to the British side of the Naf clearly meant nothing to him. Shahpuri was also apparently a continuation of the Chittagong mainland (being separated from it only by a narrow and shallow channel) and Governor-General Amherst pointed this out to the Burmese; but an identical objection could be made to this argument — that the criterion involved need not have been a valid one for the Burmese.

Until a guard was stationed at Shahpuri, the conflicting claims to the island had remained unknown to both sides. This was understandable; since it was uncultivated, there was no question of either side attempting to realize revenue from it. As for the Burmese practice

<sup>10</sup> BSPC, 12 March 1824, Robertson to Swinton, 1 March, enclosed letter from Myowun.



of issuing permits, it could remain concealed from the British since the frontier region was very loosely administered. In 1811, Chin Pyan had been able to organize a rebel army in Chittagong, without the local Magistrate's knowledge.

The dispute towards the southeast had an effect on British policy towards the principality of Cachar which bordered Bengal and Burmese-controlled Assam and Manipur. The British had intervened militarily in the state in 1799 and 1804 and the ruler, Govind Chandra, had applied unsuccessfully to become tributary to them. Subsequently, Cachar's history became bound up with that of the neighbouring Burmese - controlled state of Manipur, where three brothers, Marjit Singh, Chourjit Singh and Gambhir Singh contended for power. Margit Singh was initially successful, and his brothers fled to Cachar, where they deposed Govind Chandra. The latter unsuccessfully offered his kingdom to Lord Hastings in return for re-installment.<sup>11</sup> After this Marjit Singh, expelled from Manipur by the Burmese, also came to Cachar. In 1823, Gambhir Singh and Chourjit Singh fell out, and the latter was totally defeated. He fled to British territory and offered the kingdom to the British, claiming falsely to have been in undisturbed possession of it for years.

The Calcutta Government, on receiving his letter, decided to bring Cachar under its influence. A pass offering access from Manipur to Bengal ran through Manipur and Cachar. The British had been uneasy for some time about the exposed state of the Bengal — Assam frontier. Now that the Shahpuri dispute had begun, they wished to seal this pass by taking Cachar under their wing. An examination of their records suggested that the Burmese had never asserted rights over Cachar and therefore could not now take umbrage at the British move. A report they received suggested that the Burmese were becoming interested in Cachar and this made speedy action necessary. They had doubts about Chourjit Singh's claim of undisturbed possession. The Magistrate of Sylhet was therefore instructed to investigate the situation and to make a treaty with any, who was in effective control. All those whose legitimate interests suffered would be compensated.

<sup>11</sup> BSPC, 14 November, 1823, Govind Chandra to Governor-General, 28 September, 1823.



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Upon inquiry Gambhir Singh was discovered to control most of the Cachar lowlands while Marjit controlled a small portion of them; the highlands were in the hands of native Cachar Chiefs. Gambhir Singh seemed the obvious choice, but he refused to accept a treaty and objected to Marjit forming one. A further complication arose when Govind Chandra, who had heard of Chourjit Singh's offer, and of the British writing a reply to him, wrote to the British Government, referring to his previous attempts to become a tributary ruler, and claiming that it was unjust to receive the state now at the hands of Chourjit. He went on to make a proposal which was rather vague. It was however clear from the previous portions of the letter that he would have been willing to be made a tributary ruler of Cachar by the British.<sup>12</sup> By this time, the Burmese had already attacked Shahpuri, and the Calcutta Government's next moves as regard Cachar can be discussed more conveniently in the next section.

Two Burmese armies were to enter Cachar in January, 1824. Although the Calcutta Government had suspected that the Burmese had taken an interest in Cachar, they believed that the latter had no legitimate claim to it. The truth was that the Burmese did have a claim to Cachar, and to the neighbouring state of Jaintia as well, although judged by western (and not Burmese) norms, both claims might have seemed a little tenuous. Cachar had been conquered along with Manipur in King Asin-byu-shin's time and its ruler had agreed to pay tribute. It was true that the payment of tribute was discontinued subsequently, but the Burmese had a very tenacious concept of suzerainty. King Bagyidaw of Burma, regarded himself at this time as the legitimate ruler of Thailand, because it had been conquered by King Bayinnaung in the sixteenth century. The fact that the Thais had broken away from Burmese control very quickly in the 16th century made no difference to the Burmese. As regards Jaintia, the argument was that the state had paid tribute to Assam, whose right had been inherited by the Burmese, after they had acquired suzerainty over the kingdom.

Finally, the Burmese, when they entered Cachar, claimed to be acting on an invitation from Govind Chandra, the legitimate but dispossessed ruler. It was quite likely that Govind Chandra, despairing of getting British support, turned to the Burmese instead. It was true

<sup>12</sup> BSPC, 14 November 1823, Nos. 19-23.



that he subsequently informed David Scott that he had issued no such invitation. Scott, however, did not believe him, although he considered that a considerable time had elapsed since the invitation was made. The Burmese claim concerning Govind Chandra was acutely embarrassing to the Calcutta Government and the prince, who was eager at this time to obtain British protection, might have realized this and thought it advisable to disclaim any connection with the Burmese. However, the possibility that he was speaking truthfully cannot be ruled out either. Perhaps, the Burmese were approached by a person or persons who claimed falsely to be acting on his behalf. The Burmese, on their entry into Cachar, were reportedly accompanied by an adherent, or adherents, of Govind Chandra who might have approached them earlier, though it is unclear whether they had Govind Chandra's sanction. A final point should be noted. The Burmese forces which entered Cachar had instructions not only just to restore Govind Chandra but also to apprehend the Manipuris, who had been carrying out raids into Manipur from their sanctuary in Cachar.

We can now return to the Chittagong frontier. On 8 August, 1823, the British received a letter from the Myowun of Arakan, addressed to the Governor-General, which declared Shahpuri to the Burmese, and inquired if the letter asserting it to be British had been authorized by the Governor-General. If it was, the Myowun wished to state that "from the time Arakan was subject to the original Arakanese ruler, and since it came to the golden [King of Ava's] possession, the island was always annexed to the Denhawoody [Arakanese] territories and still belong to our sovereign."<sup>13</sup> The Governor-General was asked to remove the guard, because it might lead to disputes among the lower class of people, constitute an impediment to trade and eventually cause an end of friendship.

Lord Amherst, who had recently become Governor-General, in a letter dated 15 August, 1823, emphatically upheld the British claim, referring to the fact of Shahpuri's incursion in the British records and to geographical factors. The guard, the Burmese were assured, could only have a re-assuring effect and the threat of a rupture must have been made without reflection. Amherst expressed confidence that the King, on learning the facts of the case, would recognize the justice of the British

13 Wilson, *op.cit.*, No. 17.



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claim. If this letter did not satisfy the Myowun, the Governor-General was prepared to send a representative after the monsoon to settle "all questions" relating to the boundary.<sup>14</sup> The British, therefore, were willing to discuss the Shahpuri dispute. If discussions had been held, both sides could well have discovered that this was a case of bonafide but conflicting claims, and given the worthlessness of Shahpuri, have been willing to neutralize the island. However, even before this letter reached the Myowun, a disastrous event occurred; the Arakan Government, acting on orders from the King, expelled the British party by force from the island. As a result, the British attitude hardened considerably; they were determined henceforth, among other things, on upholding their exclusive right to Shahpuri. This was not acceptable to the Court, with the result that war was inevitable after the attack. The Calcutta Council was to state in January, 1824, however, that neutralization could have been an acceptable solution before the attack.

The Arakan Government informed the Burmese Court of the presence of the guard on Shahpuri. According to the Burmese chronicle, the *Konbaungzet Mahayazawin*, the King ordered the Arakan authorities to destroy the fort.<sup>15</sup> This was a rash act, although essentially defensive; he should have attempted negotiations first.

The King's orders were read out in Arakan town before the assembled Myowuns of Arakan, Ramree, Cheduba and Sandoway (The last three places being islands of the Arakan coast, having their own Governments). A force proceeded towards Shahpuri; it was accompanied by the person who had brought the royal order and the Myowun of Ramree was apparently in command. The Burmese informed the guard at Shahpuri that the King had heard of the fort being there and had ordered its removal. The guard 'are therefore required... if they can, to destroy the stockade and quit the island instantly, not regarding day or night.'<sup>16</sup> This urgent demand not being acceded to, the Burmese

14 *Ibid.*, No. 18. The reference to "all questions" implied the existence of a problem other than the one over Shahpuri. No boundary had been demarcated in the wild territory to the North of the Naf, with the result that elephant-hunters from Chittagong had wandered into territory in which Burmese were in effective possession and had been detained as a result.

15 *Konbaungzet, Mahayazawin*, Vol. II, p. 368.

16 BSPC, 10 October 1823, Lee Warner to Swinton, 29 September, enclosed letter.



attacked the island on the night of 24 September. Three of the garrison were killed, and three wounded; one civilian was also killed. The Burmese were reported to have suffered many casualties.

Afterwards, the Myowun of Ramree told a ferryman who had gone over to Arakan from Chittagong to collect information: "Friendship exists as before among us."<sup>17</sup> So the Burmese hoped that the situation would return to normalcy after the attack.

#### *The Coming of the War:*

The Magistrate, immediately after the attack, transmitted reports which indicated that a general invasion of Chittagong was imminent. The Governor-General in Council were skeptical about these reports; they considered that the occupation of Shahpuri was the only Burmese objective. They even thought it likely, in fact, that the Burmese had evacuated Shahpuri already, although evidence to this effect had not reached them yet. All the same, they felt that Shahpuri would have to be re-occupied and the Burmese punished, so as to uphold British honour and to prevent a repetition of such incidents. The Council had little doubt that the Court had ordered the attack, as claimed by the Burmese themselves, but they thought it advisable to treat the attack in the first place as an unauthorized one by Arakanese authorities and, in this way, give the Court an opportunity to retract. A military force would be sent to occupy Shahpuri or any other portion of British territory in Burmese possession. Burmese war-boats, military posts and military equipment in the Naf and on its shores were to be destroyed. If the Burmese had withdrawn from the Naf, they were to be pursued up the Arakan river, whence they had come, and their war boats destroyed. An attack on the fort at Arakan town, located up the Arakan river, could be attempted under certain conditions. A letter would be sent to the King, remonstrating over Burmese actions, explaining the British measures and expressing the desire of the British for friendly relations. The King would be asked to disavow the acts of the provincial authorities by recalling them, inflicting public punishment on them and issuing orders to their successors not to violate the boundary. The indisputable right of the British to Shahpuri would be asserted. The "arrogant and

<sup>17</sup> BSPC, 17 October, 1823, Lee Warner to Swinton, 6 October, enclosed report.



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barbarous" Burmese monarch might, of course, resort to some hostile act.<sup>18</sup> This would mean war, and the British should therefore make defensive preparations along the border and fit out an expedition which could seize the main Burmese seaports in the event of hostilities. The frontier to the southeast would be defined after the rains, with Burmese co-operation if possible, unilaterally if necessary — it was this frontier, yet to be defined, which the King was to instruct his officials to respect.

By 17 October, the Calcutta Council had received reports showing clearly that the fear of a general invasion was groundless and that the Burmese had left Shahpuri. On that date, the projected military operations were scaled down. The British would confine themselves to re-occupying Shahpuri and re-inforcing Chittagong. Any attempt to collect war-boats on the Naf, however, would be regarded as a hostile demonstration and the boats would be sunk. The Burmese were to be informed of this. A declaration would be addressed to the Burmese government, setting forth British sentiments regarding the attack on Shahpuri and describing their retaliatory actions, but also indicating that they earnestly desired peace. This would give the King an opportunity "of disavowing and making reparations for the injury sustained by us before matters are pushed to extremities."<sup>19</sup> The decision to define the frontier to the southeast remained in force.

The messenger who took Lord Amherst's reply to the Arakan Myowun's letter brought more news from Chittagong. The Myowun, at a meeting which took place after the attack, verbally rejected Amherst's contention that Shahpuri was British, and warned the British that war would break out if they attempted to keep troops there. He announced that the Burmese would not themselves keep a guard there, but, as argued earlier, it was already too late for such a compromise. In a spirit of braggadocio, he threatened to invade Bengal via Assam and Arakan if the British occupied Shahpuri, and claimed falsely that the necessary preparations had already been made. In his letter to Amherst, he re-asserted the old Burmese claim to eastern Bengal,

<sup>18</sup> BSPC, 10 October, 1823, Resolution of Governor-General in Council, 8 October, 1823.

<sup>19</sup> BSPC, 17 October, 1823, Resolution of Governor-General in Council, 17 October, 1823.



threatening to seize Dacca and Murshidabad if the British re-occupied Shahpuri.<sup>20</sup>

This news angered and alarmed the British, but did not produce any fundamental change in policy; in fact, the British had a suspicion that the threat of an invasion was unauthorized. The districts of Ranpur and Sylhet to the North-East were reinforced. David Scott, Civil Commissioner of Rangpur, was asked to advise the Calcutta Council on the question of Cachar, where the British were by this time doubly anxious to exclude Burmese influence. Scott was made, Agent of the Governor-General to the North-East, with overall responsibility for policy in the area. The Commander-in-Chief, Sir Edward Paget, was asked to prepare a plan for strengthening the defences of the frontier. He was informed that if the King resorted to hostile acts after the re-occupation of Shahpuri, the British would proceed to teach him "juster notions" of their power.<sup>21</sup> The measures contemplated included a seizure of Burmese sea ports and islands and supporting rebellions by the indigenous populations of Assam, Manipur and "even" Arakan.<sup>22</sup> However, there were serious objections to a war; Shahpuri was insignificant, the large trade with Burma would be endangered and the British would encounter geographical and climatic difficulties. Therefore, if the King remained quiescent after the re-occupation of Shahpuri, matters would revert to their former footing.

On 21 November, British sepoy re-occupied Shahpuri and proceeded to build a stockade while six vessels entered the Naf to prevent the Burmese assembling war-boats there. The British commander in the Shahpuri area, Colonel Shapland, received a letter from the Maungdow Uchurung (official) complaining that a group of Chittagong Arakanese had plundered a village in Arakan and inquiring if the British were planning something similar. One Rikut Nam Tak was allegedly

20 For a discussion, see the present writer's paper, "The Canning Mission to Burma of 1809-10," *Journal of South-east Asian Studies*, Singapore, March, 1979. The basis of this claim was that the region had once paid tribute to Arakan, which had thereby acquired a suzerainty over it, which had been inherited by the Burmese after their conquest of the state. This was very similar to the Burmese attitude to Thailand which has been discussed previously. Although the Burmese had raised the question of eastern Bengal in the past, and although the Court was to refer to it in a letter to the British in the course of the current dispute, it did not affect Court policy at this time and the Myowun's threat was wholly unauthorized.

21 BSPC, 31 October 1823, Swinton to Adjutant-General.

22 *Ibid.*



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responsible for the raid; Colonel Shapland was asked not to take advice from him. As stated earlier, the idea that Arakanese immigrants were egging the British on was a recurring motif in Burmese statements. Shapland assured the Burmese that nothing of the kind was intended. The Magistrate had also informed the Burmese earlier that no attack would be made on Arakan. There was a strong possibility, however, that notwithstanding these assurances, the Burmese, noting the weight of the British armament on the Naf and the military movements in Chittagong district, and thinking that Shahpuri could not be the sole object of such preparations, expected an attack on Arakan itself. In mid-January, 1824 the Darogah of Tek Naf stated that Hussein Ali, an interpreter employed by the Arakan Government, had told him that the Arakan authorities had informed the King that the British were collecting troops with the intention of invading Arakan. T. C. Robertson, late in January 1824, also expressed his belief that the Burmese authorities had reported to the Court that the British planned an invasion of Arakan.

Pending the receipt of instructions from Ava, the Arakan authorities made no attempt to retake the island forcibly. However, they re-asserted the claim to Shahpuri and issued a warning on the consequences of re-occupying it. The claim was supported by the following evidence: "whenever the Mugs [Arakanese] or Musselmans wished to carry over the cattle to feed on the island of Shahpure they received a written order . . . from the Uchurung."<sup>23</sup> Had this evidence been presented earlier and had there been no attack on the island, the Calcutta Government might well have realized that the Burmese were acting in good faith and the island could conceivably have been neutralized; but it was too late by this time for such measures.

Since the local officials did not oppose the re-occupation of Shahpuri, and the threatened immediate invasion of Bengal did not materialise, the Calcutta Council waited for the Burmese Court's response to the occupation. They had hopes that it would not oppose it. Towards the north-east also, a clash did not seem inevitable. The Council did receive information that Burmese forces in Assam and Manipur were advancing on Cachar (This was, of course, the expedition undertaken to restore Govind Chandra and apprehend the Manipuris).

<sup>23</sup> BSPC, 24 December, 1823 Lee Warner to Swinton, 1 December, enclosed letter.



However, warning letters addressed to them by Scott and the Sylhet Magistrate might induce them to desist. If this failed, the British could threaten the Assam frontier by moving troops there and thus try to compel the Burmese to withdraw. In the last resort, the Burmese could perhaps be induced to leave Cachar by the threat of an attack on them in Cachar itself. The Calcutta Council also made—albeit reluctantly—a major concession. They had decided, provided Scott approved the idea, to make Govind Chandra ruler of Cachar rather than Gambhir Singh, whose independent manner had offended them, and whose reluctance to accept an alliance created the false impression that he had an understanding with the Burmese. Scott endorsed the idea, but warned that Govinda Chandra might have an understanding with the Burmese and suggested that he be made an independent ruler of Cachar under an Anglo-Burmese guarantee if this turned out to be true and a rupture seemed probable otherwise. The Council replied, expressing a decided preference for excluding Burmese influence, since their motive in entering Cachar was hostile. However, they were anxious for peace and somewhat embarrassed at the news that their candidates might have a connection with the Burmese as well. They therefore gave Scott the necessary discretion for making such an agreement. He was also asked to bring Jaintia, a state discovered to offer access from Assam into Cachar, into a treaty relationship on the same lines as Cachar.

Between mid-January and mid-February, 1824, the situation deteriorated rapidly, contrary to British hopes. By mid-February, the Council acting under pressure of events occurring both in the north-east and south-east, had decided on war. It is proposed to examine this process more closely.

The report from the Arakan authorities concerning the events at the Naf would have reached the Court by mid-December. As the Court saw it, the British had illegally occupied Burmese territory for a second time. The Arakan authorities might also have warned them of the possibility of a British invasion of Arakan. The Court gave orders to the Arakan authorities that the fort of Shahpuri “be removed and whatever Mugs (Arakanese) and Bangalees are in it to be seized and to



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execute [sic]."<sup>24</sup> Apart from this, Maha Bandula, the great Burmese General, accompanied by a force of 1,800 to 2,000 men, set up a camp at Hsinbyugyun and began raising an army from the villages between Pagan and Prome. While this large force was being assembled in Upper Burma, a detachment of troops—probably an advance party—was sent into Arakan, where they arrived by early February.<sup>25</sup> What purpose lay behind these military movements? The British occupation of Shahpuri in November would have shown the Court that they could not expect the British to be acquiescent after the attack on the island. A large army would therefore have to be sent to Arakan to support the Arakan authorities. Besides, the latter might well have informed the Court that the British intended to invade Arakan. The Burmese government's reply (channelled through the Myowun of Pegu) to the British statement on Shahpuri throws light on the Court's attitude at this time. To judge from internal evidence, the Court, at the time it sent this reply through the Myowun of Pegu, had heard of the British re-occupation of Shahpuri but not of their subsequent withdrawal from the island nor of the fighting in Cachar in January. The letter mentioned some grievances—protection given to rebels from frontier areas and the British possession of eastern Bengal, which was claimed as Arakanese territory—but also stated that "these being worldly matters, they were not worth notice, on account of the commercial intercourse carried on by seafaring people".<sup>26</sup> The expression "worldly matters" is obscure,—this sentence is not completely clear,—but it is certain that the Burmese were willing to overlook these issues and that one reason for this was the trade between the two countries.

As regards Shahpuri, the letter did not specify any kind of military action, although the Court did order the Arakan authorities to attack the island. Nevertheless, it upheld the Burmese claim firmly, and used language which was defiant, menacing and conveyed a sense of great urgency. Yet the Court had not ruled out the possibility of a peaceful settlement, for the Governor-General was asked to make a careful

<sup>24</sup> BSPC, 31 January, 1824. Robertson to Swinton, 14 January, enclosed letter from the Burmese. There is more evidence that the King's order was violent. See BPSC, 13 February, 1824, Robertson to Swinton, 31 January, enclosed letter from Myowun.

<sup>25</sup> *Konbaungzet Mahayazawin*, Vol. II, pp. 369–70. The evidence in the British records suggests that the vanguard arrived in Arakan early in February.

<sup>26</sup> Wilson, *op.cit.*, No. 31.



investigation and assessment of the matter, and then represent his case, via Arakan, to Maha Bandula, who had been given authority to handle the affair; until everything was settled, a communication "need not be made" to the King.<sup>27</sup> The Governor-General was also cautioned against accepting the representations of Arakanese rebels. The Court, it should be noted, had also ordered the Arakan authorities to drive the British out of Shahpuri immediately. They could have expected to receive an explanatory statement from the Governor-General only after the attack had taken place.

Early in January, Thomas Campbell Robertson, who had replaced the ailing Lee Warner as Magistrate of Chittagong, and had been made Political Agent as well, withdrew the British garrison from Shahpuri, because it was being decimated by disease and Robertson did not believe the Arakan authorities would proceed to occupy the island themselves. He also wrote to the Arakan Government on 8 January, asking them to send someone to participate in the demarcation of the territory above the Naf, decided upon by the Calcutta Council in October.

The Arakan Government, on receiving the King's orders to destroy the fort and put to death the soldiers there, collected a force in the interior under the command of the Myowuns of the coastal islands of Cheduba, Ramree and Sandoway. They then heard of the withdrawal of the garrison, which must have struck them as a conciliatory move. They also received Robertson's letter of 8 January. They then sent four representatives to Robertson to discuss, not the boundary, but Shahpuri.

These discussions were held on 14 and 15 January. Robertson reported that the Burmese would be willing to allow the island to remain unoccupied by either side. However, they would never agree to a British occupation, and such an act would make war unavoidable. Robertson seemed to have deliberately given the Burmese the impression that this idea of leaving Shahpuri unoccupied would be acceptable to the British, although he avoided making any binding commitment. Further details, for example, whether he held out the prospect of a British declaration to this effect, or only of tacit acquiescence, are lacking. This proposed compromise was inconsistent with the Calcutta

27 *Ibid.*



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Government's policy of 17 October. Robertson, however, wanted time to re-inforce the British troops in the district, whose ranks had been depleted by illness and he thought it advisable, in view of the lateness of the season, to postpone hostilities till after the rains. He also wanted to give the Calcutta Government an opportunity to consider the proposal, which did spare them the necessity of fighting a war for the sake of Shahpuri. Incidentally, Robertson inferred correctly from the attitude of the Burmese, that they expected to be supported by a much larger force from Burma.

The Calcutta Council, in line with their policy of 17 October, rejected the proposal — while indicating that it might have been acceptable if it had been made before the attack on Shahpuri. Robertson was convinced that an occupation of Shahpuri would lead to Burmese attacks and the Arakan authorities had written to him that the King had ordered an attack on the island. Under the policy of 17 October, such an attitude meant war. The fact remained, however, that no attack had been made on Shahpuri, and the statements of the Arakan authorities did not amount to absolute proof that the Court would oppose the occupation of the island. The current Arakan Myowun after all, had once made an unauthorized threat of war. It was probably for this reason that the Council still did not declare war. However, they were infuriated by the aggressive attitude of the Burmese negotiators. Robertson was instructed to stop discussions and be guided by the instructions of 17 October, if the Burmese continued to uphold the claim.

An important development occurred in the north — in the east also — clash in Cachar in mid-January. Certain Burmese letters (whose import was not grasped by the British) give us an idea of Burmese thinking at this time. The Burmese in Assam received a British communication from which they gathered that the British did not want them to enter Cachar, because they were allied with the Manipuris. The Burmese wrote promising not to enter Cachar if the British could persuade the Manipuris to renew their allegiance to the Burmese King — which would end their raids into Manipur. The Burmese might, like Scott, have been thinking a joint protectorate over Cachar; they did not, after all, require the Manipuris to forsake their supposed allegiance to the British. Govind Chandra, the eventual British choice, would, of course, have been even more acceptable in this role to the Burmese. Subsequently, the Burmese did enter Cachar, but according to another



letter the Burmese wrote, this was after they received a letter from the British to the effect that Govind Chandra was now their ally and they wanted the Burmese to re-establish him in Cachar.<sup>28</sup> This major misunderstanding was obviously due to incorrect translation. The result was that the Burmese, thinking that they had the approval of the British, entered Cachar from Assam and Manipur. The commander of the British troops near Cachar frontier, Major Newton, hearing of this development, and desiring to prevent a union of these forces, set out on 17 February to attack the force from Assam, which was camping near the Bengal frontier. Newton took the Burmese by surprise — as was only to be expected — and routed them, with heavy losses. This procedure was, in fact, a violation of the Calcutta Government's policy, which was to try peaceful methods before using force. The violation appeared to have escaped censure, or even notice, at Calcutta. Furthermore, the British, in spite of receiving explanatory letters referred to above, continued to think that the Burmese had deliberately flouted their warnings in entering Cachar. They seemed to have assumed that the Burmese were telling elaborate lies in their letters for some old purpose of their own. On several later occasions, the British were to reveal a similar inability to absorb the contents of Burmese letters when these were of an unusual nature.

Another important development took place in Chitragong. The Myowun of Arakan had informed Maha Bandula at Hsinbyugyun of the easing of tension at the frontier. The general then sent a representative (accompanied apparently by some subordinates) to see Shahpuri island and settle the dispute. The representative spent some time on the island and was satisfied that it was within the King's dominions. He burnt a hut left behind by the British and subsequently a Burmese flag was raised over the island. Moreover, seeing a military force at Tek Naf, and armed vessels near Shahpuri, he lured two naval officers and some sailors ashore and sent them off to Arakan town as prisoners. The Myowun protested to Maha Bandula about the kidnapping and the latter ordered the release of the party. They arrived in Chittagong on 19 February. By this time, however, the Calcutta Council had decided on war — a decision to which the kidnapping had contributed to some extent, even though war could not have been avoided in the long run in any case.

<sup>28</sup> Wilson, *op. cit.*, Nos. 21 (B) and 21 (C).



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The news that the Burmese had dared to lay hands on British officers produced an explosion of anger at Calcutta, where tempers were already high because of the Arakan authorities' attitude over Shahpuri and the intrusions into Cachar. In fact, the Council was willing to go to war over this issue. Robertson was instructed on 31 January to ask for their release within a specified time, failing which the two countries would be in a state of war. The evidence that the Court would not acquiesce in British control over Shahpuri was now even stronger than before, since the "commissioners", who were correctly supposed to have come from the capital, would scarcely have acted as they had done if the Court had decided to meet British wishes concerning the island.<sup>29</sup>

It was on 13 February that the Council finally decided to take the plunge and go to war. Several factors were responsible. It was practically certain by that time that the Court would not yield over Shahpuri—a sufficient ground for war under the policy laid down on October 17. Robertson had also reported, pessimistically and misleadingly, that he did not expect the naval party to be returned. He also transmitted an unconfirmed report about Burmese troops advancing into Arakan to fight the British. It was uncertain whether there really was a troop movement at this time and if there was, their purpose could not have been to make war, since the Burmese, as will be seen, believed that the threat of a war was over. The Council had also received information which suggested that the authority of Arakan Government had been superseded by that of a General from the Court (Maha Bandula); this implied that the attitude of the Arakan Government was that of the Court, and was further evidence of the Court's intransigence. Towards the north-east, the Burmese had not evacuated Cachar. The Council were in the grip of the notion that the Burmese had deliberately ignored their warnings in entering Cachar and were angered by this. Another development which caused alarm at Calcutta was that the Burmese in Cachar asked for the surrender of the Manipuri princes who were now in British territory and warned that the King's orders were that if they were not surrendered, they must be apprehended wherever they might be which would include British territory. An armed intrusion amounted to an act of war for the British. Yet, it did not appear in that light to the Burmese and past experience—which was not available to the members of the Calcutta Council—suggested that the Burmese would withdraw if the British point of view was explained

<sup>29</sup> BSPC, 6 February, 1824, Swinton to Robertson, 31 October.



to them. Meanwhile, David Scott was arguing — with what accuracy it is hard to say — that Cachar was a difficult country to campaign in and the best way to force an evacuation of Cachar was to invade Assam — although this would have amounted to an act of war, since Assam was a Burmese territory. Finally, on 6 February, Scott wrote to Lt. Colonel Macmorine, the British commander at the Asam frontier, arguing that if the Burmese sailed down the Brahmaputra in their war boats on a predatory incursion during the monsoon, the British would be helpless. Their war-boats were so fast that the British would have no advance notice, while no effective retaliatory or defensive measure would be possible during the monsoon. There were many objections to this argument. Among other things, it was doubtful whether there were enough Burmese boatmen in Assam to make a major river incursion possible and whether Burmese-type war-boats were locally available. Again, if the British could not prevent an incursion, they could at least have prevented the intruders from returning. Nevertheless, the argument was accepted on 13 February and the invasion of Assam was ordered to be carried out within a month; this amounted to a decision to go to war in all except a formal sense. Amherst and his colleague in the Council, John Fendall, wrote minutes explaining why war was necessary, and discussing the demands to be made on Burma, and on 20 February, a resolution embodying the substance of these minutes was passed. The declaration of war was delayed until 5 March, so as not to give the Burmese in Assam time to prepare defences.

Most of the factors which influenced the Calcutta Council's decision to go to war were not good grounds for war, or were incapable at the time of being proved to be such. Burmese policy in the north-east was not aggressive. It was not certain at this time that it was really necessary to advance into Assam, whether because of the terrain in Cachar or because of the risk of a river incursion; the second argument in fact, seems very unconvincing. Towards the south-east, Robertson's view that the naval party would not be released turned out to be untrue. However, the Council's belief that the Court would not yield over Shahpuri was correct, and under the policy laid down on 17 October, this meant war. The Council had good grounds for thinking that the Court would not meet British wishes over Shahpuri: the attitude of the Burmese negotiators in mid-January, as reported by Robertson, the kidnapping which, although unauthorized, would surely not have occurred if the Court had



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already yielded over Shahpuri, and the news that the authority of the Arakan officials had been superseded by that of a General from the Court, which meant that they were executing Court policy. In addition, no reply had arrived to the Governor-General's celebration to the Burmese government, although a reply was due by mid-February, and the British considered that they could interpret the Court's silence as indicating non-compliance. A reply did arrive in March, and although it did not state explicitly that the Court would oppose a British occupation of Shahpuri (which was, in fact, its policy) it was very menacing in tone.

The demands the Calcutta Council intended to make on the Burmese were, principally, the recognition of the British right to Shahpuri, the renunciation of all claim to Assam, Cachar and Jaintia, acquiescence in a frontier between Arakan and Chittagong north of the Naf drawn unilaterally by the British and the payment of an indemnity of two million rupees; this last demand, however, could be modified to suit the circumstances of the Court.

*Aftermath:*

Meanwhile, the Burmese in Arakan remained in profound ignorance of the developments at Calcutta. As suggested earlier, Robertson had given them the impression that neutralization would be acceptable to the British. Late in January, the Myowun of Arakan wrote to him asking him to send a representative to adjust matters, so that he could report to the Court that the crisis had been solved. The Myowun clearly believed that the crisis was over but felt the need for a discussion to finalize matters. In February, the Myowun wrote again to Robertson. He announced the release of the naval party, referred to Robertson having restored peace to the district by evacuating Shahpuri and stated that he had written to the commander of the Burmese forces in Arakan asking him to withdraw his troops, and that this officer had applied to Maha Bandula for permission to do this. This letter again showed that the Myowun thought the crisis was over, although it was not clear why he no longer desired a final discussion. Robertson wrote a reply on 19 February, asking among other things for a written acknowledgement of the British right to Shahpuri; if no satisfactory reply was received in ten days, the relations of amity would be dissolved. This letter was very revealing but the Myowun sent word that he could not understand it in either its Burmese or its Persian version — the first because of the Arakanese words it contained and



the second because of its complimentary style. Robertson decided that the Myowun's incomprehension was feigned, and decided to issue a proclamation suspending all intercourse between the two countries. No letter was received, as was only natural, since the Myowun had already answered Robertson's note. The proclamation again would have been revealing but Robertson did not issue one on 29 February, Since he heard a report that Burmese troops had assembled near the Naf and thought it might be unsafe to do so.

A letter which Myowun wrote to Robertson and was forwarded by the latter to Calcutta on 10 April, showed how much in the dark the Burmese still were at this time as to the real state of affairs. The Myowun stated that Maha Bandula had advanced from Ava to execute the King's orders concerning Shahpuri, when the Burmese gathered from Robertson that the Shahpuri affair was settled. The Myowun went on to give an account of events in the north; the Manipuri brothers had excited disturbances; Govind Chandra had appealed to the Burmese King for help; two Burmese Generals had advanced into Cachar and requests were made to the British to surrender the Manipuri traitors; however, sepoys had intervened on behalf of the Manipuris (actually this was not the reason for the British intervention) and disturbances had resulted; on hearing this, Maha Bandula had advanced into Arakan with an army. Over Shahpuri, there was peace but disturbances had occurred because of treason of the Manipuris, and the support they had received from the sepoys. "To learn the cause of this the Raja [Myowun] writes to the judge of Chittagong and with the concurrence of the general the Maha Bandula sends a Wuzeer [official] together with the Doobushee Hessein Ulee [an interpreter] to learn what is the state of the case and quickly write me a letter about it."<sup>30</sup>

So the Burmese believed that the Shahpuri crisis had been resolved, but had heard of fighting with the British to the north, and, believing that the British had intervened to help the Manipuris, wanted to know the reason for this. Robertson believed that the Burmese were trying to spy on the British by sending an agent with a letter to Calcutta. He replied, stating that the information in question should be obtained from David Scott. Robertson avoided mentioning that the two countries were at war. As a result, the Myowun and Maha Bandula would

30 BSPC, 20 April, 1824. Robertson to Swinton, 10 April, enclosed letter.



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have continued to remain ignorant not only of the true facts about Cachar, but even of the existence of a state of war between the two countries.

Late in January, 1824, the Myowun had informed Robertson that he had asked the advance party of Maha Bandula's force to withdraw from Arakan town, and that its commander had applied to Maha Bandula for permission to do this. The letter just discussed showed that Maha Bandula, instead of withdrawing the advance party, had advanced into Arakan himself with more troops, but for the purpose not of invading Bengal but of learning why the British had supported the Manipuris. Subsequently, in May and June, 1824, Burmese armies entered Chittagong. The statements made by the Burmese made it perfectly clear that these armies had no aggressive intentions; they intended only to demand the surrender of political enemies and of Govind Chandra, who was to be installed as a ruler of Cachar. In spite of this, the British believed that their purpose was aggressive. How is this to be explained? One reason, undoubtedly, was that the Burmese chose to send armies to make their demands, instead of letters or messengers, and an intruding army, not unnaturally, was associated in the minds of the British with an invasion. This would have been specially the case after the Burmese in Chittagong had destroyed a British force stationed at Ramu. The Burmese had sent armies into Bengal before to demand the surrender of refugees — in 1787, 1794, and 1799 — and the British officials who had dealt with these invasions might have understood the nature of the one in 1824. But the last of the preceding incursions had taken place in 1799, a generation earlier; the officials in 1824 had no experience of this unconventional mode of demanding refugees. Apart from this, the British had been bracing themselves for a Burmese push into Chittagong for some time. The previous incursions, by comparison, had occurred at a time of peace; since no invasion had been expected then, the Burmese purpose had a better chance of being understood. Finally, there was a tendency in 1824 to suspect the Burmese of treachery in their dealings; their professions of peaceful intent were believed to have some sinister purpose behind them.

It must be emphasized that the Burmese saw nothing objectionable in sending a military force into a foreign territory to demand refugees. The other party would have a right to complain if the force destroyed property or killed people, but the Burmese were careful to avoid this. The British attack on the Burmese pursuit force of 1799 drew a protest from the King Bodawpaya in 1802, while the Arakan Myowun of that



time seemed to feel that the British should have supplied the Burmese force with provisions, instead of attacking it, since it had been in British territory for a considerable time.

As stated earlier, the Burmese in 1824 made every effort to make their peaceful intentions clear. On approaching the British post at Ratnapullung, they sent word to the guard that they intended to camp on the spot, but not to fight. The Jemadar commanding the post abandoned it on his own account, because he had run out of water — not because he was apprehensive about a Burmese attack. The Arakan Myowun claimed later that the Burmese were fired upon while at Ratnapullung by Sepoys and Arakanese from Ramu.

On 13 May, the Burmese army advanced from Ratnapullung and occupied some hills east of Ramu. The British had taken up position behind a river. Captain Noton, the British commander, was determined to prevent the Burmese crossing river, and orders were given to the British picquets to fire if the Burmese came within range of their muskets. Noton was, of course, entitled to give an order of this kind, since the British had already declared war on Burma. On the afternoon of 13 May, two horsemen approached the river bank. Captain Noton communicated with these horsemen. According to a British officer who survived the ensuing battle, they:

“... disavowed any hostile intention of the Burmese towards us, but desired only that some rebellious subjects under our protection should be delivered up to them, offering at the same time to explain the views of the Burmese provided Captain Noton would allow them to cross the river with a guard of one hundred horsemen and guarantee the safety of that party.”<sup>31</sup>

Noton apparently believing that the Burmese had some ruse in mind, rejected the suggestion. This was a mistake. A guard of hundred horsemen would not have been a threat to the British force, which was about a thousand strong. By the evening of 14 May, the entire Burmese force had concentrated on the opposite side of the river. The British assumed that they intended to cross the river and fired on them,

31 Wilson, *op. cit.*, No. 36,



causing considerable confusion. After the firing, according to the same report, "a party of the enemy came round to the river and the picquet was engaged in a sharp skirmish with them."<sup>32</sup> The Myowun of Arakan claimed later that the Burmese forces, after they had been fired on, advanced "to say what would have contributed to pacify both sides," and were subjected to more firing; perhaps, the party mentioned in the British report consisted of the would-be negotiators referred to by the Myowun.<sup>33</sup> According to the Myowun, the Burmese interpreter, Hussein Ali, was wounded in this renewed firing. Upon this, the royal official accompanying the Burmese force, according to his own subsequent testimony, gave orders for an attack on the British which was launched on the morning of 15 May.

Once they had decided to fight, the Burmese fought with determination. They were down the British by continuous attacks on 15 and 16 May. On the morning of 17 May, the British who had sustained heavy losses and were suffering from the effects of sleeplessness, attempted to stage an orderly retreat from Kamu, but were cut to pieces while doing so.

After the battle, the Myowun wrote a letter to the British, with the apparent intention of removing the impression — very likely to arise after the battle — that the Burmese incursion had been hostile in intent. He assured them that the Burmese King wanted peace. The Bengalis of Chittagong, he went on, had excited a dispute over Shahpuri, but the Magistrate, on receiving a letter from the Burmese, had wisely relinquished the island. Subsequently, some mischievous persons had again misled the British and there had been a clash (in Cachar). On this, the general had advanced from Pegu into Arakan. The Myowun went on to describe events at Ratnapullung and Ramu and to explain how the battle at Ramu had come to be fought. These "calamities" (the fighting and loss of life at Ramu) would not, he stated, have occurred if the British had not protected the traitor Hynja."<sup>34</sup>

For some reason, the Myowun stopped short of making an explicit demand for the surrender of Hynja and other refugee leaders. Perhaps,

32 *Ibid.*

33 Wilson, *op. cit.*, No. 38.

34 *Ibid.*



he was expecting a British reply to this re-assuring letter, inquiring what the Burmese wanted and he would then have made the demand.

The Myowun's letter, together with the evidence provided by British witnesses showed clearly that the Burmese had had no aggressive intentions. Also, the Burmese failed to advance on Chittagong town, although they could have taken it immediately after the Ramu battle, before the British could have reinforced it adequately. The Burmese purpose was not understood all the same. The incursion looked too much like an invasion, especially after the battle at Ramu, a while their conciliatory statements were thought to be attempts to put the British off their guard. Robertson wrote to Swinton, stating that the Myowun's conciliatory letter and the failure of the Burmese to advance on Chittagong might have led him to think that the Burmese had given up their plan of invading Chittagong.<sup>35</sup> The Calcutta Council agreed with him. Colonel Shapland, the British military commander in the area, basing himself on reports reaching him, suggested that the Burmese planned to incorporate the territory they had supposedly occupied into their empire before advancing further. In the same report, he also suggested, somewhat contradictorily, that the delay was due to their habitual caution. All these explanations were wide of the mark. The real reason for the peaceful behaviour of the Burmese was there for all to see in the Myowun's letter and the British reports.

The Calcutta Government, while agreeing with Robertson's assessment of Burmese intentions, instructed him to write to them, asking them to prove their sincerity by releasing prisoners and leaving the district; in this way, it was hoped to stall matters until the town of Chittagong could be reinforced. On 20 May, Robertson reported that the town was out of danger since the Burmese would not be able to reach it before reinforcements arrived. The fact was that Chittagong was never in any danger at all. No attack was made by the British on the Burmese force, apparently because of the health hazards and difficulties presented by the monsoon. The Calcutta Government hoped that the news of the British attack on Rangoon would induce the Burmese to withdraw.

35 BSPC, 28 May, 1824, Robertson to Swinton, 22 May.



Robertson wrote a letter of the stipulated kind to the Burmese, and also released four prisoners himself as an inducement. The persons who took the prisoners to the Burmese camp was taken to see the four Myowuns and a royal official whose authority, according to the messenger, was above that of the others (this was confirmed by the official's statement). The Burmese had heard by this time of the British seizure of Cheduba and Rangoon. There was a possibility that they had doubts about the authenticity of the report concerning Rangoon, but they had no doubts about what had happened in Cheduba and it would have made them aware that the British were waging war on them. The official spoke to the messenger, stating that the Burmese had come to conclude an amicable adjustment, that the British troops at Rutnapullung had refused to discuss anything with the Burmese, and that they had been fired on, that the Burmese had advanced to Ramu, that they had sent the interpreter Hussein Ali, to talk about an adjustment of differences but that the British had fired and wounded the interpreter in the side, upon which the official had given orders for the battle to begin. The official stated that the Burmese did not want the "contest" to continue; they would withdraw if "Hynja, Rangjhang and other Mug [Arakanese] traitors were surrendered to them."<sup>36</sup> (The Calcutta government, it will be recalled, had instructed Robertson to ask for a withdrawal).

The Myowun of Arakan, writing in reply to Robertson's letter, stated that the matter of releasing prisoners had been referred to the Court; he was presumably unwilling to release prisoners without royal authority, now that the two countries were at war. He did not demand the surrender of Arakanese leaders but stated that Hynja and other Arakanese had "through their nefarity and wickedness" caused the war; once it ended, the "insignificant individuals" who had been taken prisoner would be released.<sup>37</sup>

On 16 August, 1824, Robertson reported that the Burmese army, according to information reaching him, had recrossed the Naf.

In June, 1823, another Burmese force took possession of Cachar. The commander wrote as follows to the British: "Why do you now league with the Munypoorees and break the bonds of amity? This is not wise. You will do well to act in such a manner that peace and

<sup>36</sup> BSPC, 2 July, 1824, Robertson to Swinton, 21 June, enclosed deposition.

<sup>37</sup> BSPC, 2 July, 1824, Robertson to Swinton, 21 June, enclosed letter.



amity may be restored. I am come to invest the Rajah of Cachar with the (?) possession of his country. What is the reason you ... fight with us in Cachar? We have orders not to quarrel with you; therefore I send this letter .... [by one of Govind Chandra's adherents] you will release the Rajah. Having reinstated him, I will return to my own country. You will also release Marjeet the Jubraj [Yuvaraj, or younger prince] who has broken his faith with us. I shall carry him back with me."<sup>38</sup>

This letter again showed clearly that the Burmese were not intending to invade Bengal — the expression "we have orders not to quarrel with you" is conclusive. Admittedly, there were other things in the letter which are wholly clear; why, for example, the Burmese should have demanded the surrender of Marjit Singh only and why they should have believed that Govind Chandra and Margit Singh were prisoners of the British — as implied by the use of the term "release" (if correctly translated).

We need to turn now to the events at Rangoon. The British found on arriving at Rangoon in May, 1824, that the local authorities were totally unprepared to meet a British attack. This again was evidence that the Burmese court no longer expected hostilities with the British and that the armies sent into Chittagong and Cachar were a peaceful mission; otherwise, Rangoon, the principal sea-port of the Burmese empire, would not have been left completely undefended and at the mercy of British sea power. It is worth noting that several months earlier, when war would have seemed quite likely to the Court, there had been repercussions at Rangoon — as was in fact, inevitable, in view of its geographical position. In March, 1824, the Calcutta Council received a report from Captain Fielden who had brought the Burmese Government's reply to the Governor-General's declaration on the Shahpuri affair. He stated that there had once been a rumour in the town that was expected and that a general would arrive to make preparations against the enemy. The Burmese had plans then the erect batteries at a number of places in the Rangoon area. They cleaned their weapons at this stage and purchased a few muskets from Fielden's ship. But talk of war subsided, no batteries were erected, and no general arrived. In fact, Rangoon was in a weaker position at the time of Fielden's

<sup>38</sup> BSPC, 23 July, 1824, Tucker, Commissioner, Sylhet, to Swinton, 17 June, 1824, enclosed letter.



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departure than before, because the Myowun had left for the capital, taking a great many warriors with him.<sup>39</sup> This development must have been due to the Burmese having gained the impression that the crisis at the Arakan frontier had been resolved, and the danger of war had gone.

It was on an unsuspecting town, therefore, that the British blow fell. Their expeditionary force, commanded by Sir Archibald Campbell, occupied Rangoon on 11 May, 1824. The previous Myowun, who had gone to the capital had died and a successor — Shakya Wungyi — had been appointed, but was still up river at the time of the invasion. Authority in Rangoon was in the hands of two Yewuns (officials junior to Myowuns), one senior to the other. The population abandoned the town when the British arrived, partly no doubt out of fear of the invaders, and partly because the local government forced people away from the town and subsequently kept them away. The British found themselves isolated in Rangoon — something that had been totally unexpected and was to cause them great hardship in the months ahead.

The political officer attached to the expedition, Major John Canning, attempted to open communication with the Burmese, in order to have the peace terms sent to the Court. On 3 June, two former employees of the Rangoon Government held discussions with the British. The testimony of foreigners resident at the capital collected by the British after the war suggested that the reaction of the King and Court, on hearing of the occupation of Rangoon, was to try to apprehend the invaders immediately. The statements of the two Burmese negotiators showed that these reports were utterly misleading. The King, they stated, "had ordered the Viceroy to settle all matters amicably."<sup>40</sup> By this time, orders from the capital could have reached the Wungyi, who was still some distance up river. News of the British occupation of Rangoon reached the capital on 23 May and a boat sent from the capital could reach Rangoon in three or four days.<sup>41</sup> The Burmese stated that they had been sent for the purpose of securing an amicable adjustment; orders have been given in the meantime to the Burmese outposts to stop firing on the British. The British asked for credentials; the Burmese produced "a scrap of paper" containing what Canning called "the

<sup>39</sup> BSPC, 19 March, 1824, Rowland to Stirling, n. d.

<sup>40</sup> Home Miscellaneous Series, (HMS), Vol. 663, Canning's diary, entry for 3 June.

<sup>41</sup> H. Cox, *Journal of a Residence in the Burmhan Empire*, Westmead, England 1971, p. 332.



usual childish questions such as why are you come with ships and troops? why did you fire on the town? what do you want"?<sup>42</sup> The British were aggrieved to discover that the messengers had no credentials. They pointed this out to the Burmese, but agreed to enter into communication with them provided the Wungyi first ordered an exchange of prisoners (two British soldiers were in Burmese hands) as proof of authority and sincerity and of his genuine desire to arrange a settlement. After this, the British would be willing to enter into negotiations with the Wungyi. For the present, they wanted a boat to carry despatches to Ava. They expressed the view that the Wungyi was sure to provide one, because it was "probably connected with the prosperity of his sovereign and country."<sup>43</sup> The messengers themselves felt the Wungyi would agree.

On 7 June, more Burmese messengers arrived, and stated that two persons of rank would come on 9 June. They stated that they had been deputed by an officer of inferior rank under authority from the Wungyi. They had a letter written by two junior officers which ran as follows: "We the commanders of the Burmhan forces addressed (sic) this letter to the effect that he (the British commander) may inform us why and for what purpose he has come to the town of Nangoon (Rangoon) with his ships. In pursuance of orders received from our Chief (Shakya Wungyi), we send this letter to the British General sealed as is deemed customary. He the Woonghee is aware of the contents of it and it (?) is written by his orders. Should the British General send any answer to the letter we will faithfully communicate any such answer to the Woonghee."<sup>44</sup>

Campbell wrote a brief reply, stating that the British had come in consequence of a declaration of war issued against the Burmese Government for having insulted the British on numerous occasions, invaded British territory and murdered British subjects. He failed even to mention any peace terms, let alone specify them. This letter would have done little to remove Burmese ignorance about British intentions or the origin of the current crisis. All that had happened, so far as the Wungyi and others in his entourage knew, was that a crisis had developed over a small island at the Arakan frontier, which had been resolved

42 HMS, Vol. 663, Canning's diary, entry for 3 June.

43 *Ibid.*

44 HMS, Vol. 663, Canning's diary, entry for 7 June.



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satisfactorily, and that subsequently British sepoy had attacked the Burmese in Cachar, which was not British territory.

The Burmese messenger stated that the Wungyi was some distance up river. The Burmese authorities were furious with the Yewun for firing on the ships without negotiating first and for not having defended the town effectively. The Burmese were therefore under the false impression that the occupation of the town might have been avoided if the British had not been fired upon.

On 9 June, the Burmese envoys mentioned on 7 June arrived. One of them was a man through whom Canning had negotiated in 1810 when envoy to Burma, with the heir apparent of that time — the current monarch — on the subject of British aid in a power-struggle. This person was currently employed in the palace under the immediate authority of the King and had come directly from the Court. His companion was of secondary importance only. They stated that they had been deputed by the Wungyi, who had recently been appointed Myowun of Pegu and was now at Danubyu, four days journey by water from Rangoon; "that the King, on hearing of the arrival of strangers and ships with troops had despatched the Shakyia Woon to enquire (?) into the affair and settle all matters amicably; that the King believing his country to be at peace with the English had been greatly surprized at finding himself attacked by them without knowing why or wherefore that in such cases a conference between principals always effected more than letters [sic] messengers that consequently it was desirable that the British authorities would proceed to such officers Shakyia Woon might appoint for the interview, he and his colleagues (?) remaining in the British camp as hostages for their safe return."<sup>45</sup> They had no credentials but produced a letter written on the Wungyi's orders by the same person who had written the letter delivered on 7 June, inviting the British to depute a person of rank to hold a conference with the writer, at which he would explain the points at issue between the two governments. The Wungyi was apparently avoiding personal involvement in the negotiations. The British reply of 7 June had been received but its contents had not been quite clear to them. The deputies stated that the European prisoners would be released.

<sup>45</sup> HMS, Vol. 663, Canning's diary, entry for 9 June.



The British stated that they had come because the two countries were at war and that this state of affairs was known to the King (it was clear from the statements of the Burmese deputies that this was not the case). As regards the question of conferring with the Wungyi's agents, the British had no favours to ask for. It was "preposterous" for a British officer to go upriver to meet the Wungyi's agents instead of the Wungyi himself.<sup>46</sup> Although the deputies' statement appeared to have been a little ambiguous on this point, the writer of the letter had asked only that Campbell depute an agent; he had not suggested that Campbell go himself; there was nothing preposterous in such a suggestion. The British went on to argue that even if there was a meeting with the Wungyi, he could only refer everything to the Court, and a direct communication from the British would have the same effect. They asked once again for a boat. Canning stated that he himself would write a confidential letter to the King.

The deputies stated that "all this was right", and asked whether, if the Wungyi agreed to forward a letter, a present would accompany it.<sup>47</sup> Canning agreed, because this was in accordance with custom and amounted only a mark of respect. The deputies then stated that they had little doubt that the Wungyi would agree to forward the communication. They promised to return for the letters on 15 June.

The Burmese did not however return and negotiations were not held again until the following year. The whole notion of invaders communicating directly with the semi-divine Burmese monarch would, in fact, have seemed to the Wungyi to smack of disrespect. On the other hand, his attempt to initiate negotiations with the British through subordinates, while avoiding direct contact himself had failed. Canning, who was aware of this difficulty — he referred to "the uncertainty with which (the Wungyi) must necessarily be encompassed with respect to the sentiments of the Court as to the receipt of a letter from us" — thought that Wungyi might want to sound the Court out on the idea first before holding further communication with the British.<sup>48</sup> He might have been right in thinking a query might be put to the Court. After the conclusion of the war, a European resident at the capital stated that he heard

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> HMS Vol. 663, Canning's diary, entry for 18 June.



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a report, some time after the occupation of Rangoon, that "Major Canning was to be sent up as Ambassador to settle all differences and the news seemed to afford satisfaction to his Majesty."<sup>49</sup> The British had proposed sending a communication, not that Canning himself should go, but it is understandable that the original proposal should have undergone distortion by the time it reached the ears of this European. It ought, however, to have been accurately conveyed by the Wungyi to the Court.

Did the Burmese make any overtures in the months immediately after June? Although none is mentioned in existing studies, or in H. H. Wilson's collection of documents on the war, the question cannot be answered with confidence without a thorough investigation of the contemporary military despatches and intelligence reports. Perhaps, as at Ramu, some approach was made and was not recognized as such; one would expect one to have been made immediately after the June discussions, in view of the King's apparent eagerness for a settlement.

Late in November, 1824, a large Burmese army appeared before Rangoon. It was believed both at that time and subsequently by historians that this army was commanded in person by Maha Bandula, who had been recalled by the King from Arakan in order to drive the British out of Rangoon. However, a letter written by Maha Bandula at Danubyu, where the Burmese army retreated after its defeat by the British at Rangoon, flatly contradicted this assumption. The letter began by recapitulating recent events:

"...the Chiefs of Mannipure (Maha Bandula wrote) by name (Chourjit) and (Marjit) forgetting their allegiance to the Golden King revolted from his authority and ran away into the country of the English which the King heard. For many years friendship had subsisted between the two nations and therefore it was not right the English should have received and protected the rebels."<sup>50</sup>

<sup>49</sup> BSPC, 5 May, 1826, Robertson to Swinton, 28 April, enclosed deposition.

<sup>50</sup> Wilson, *op.cit.*, No. 83.



Perhaps because of lapses of memory on Maha Bandula's part, there were minor errors in this account, for example, the force which entered Chittagong seemed to have sought Arakanese refugees only and not Chourjit and Marjit. Maha Bandula was correct however in claiming that the army in Chittagong had had no aggressive intentions and that it was the British who had started hostilities. The letter went on to make assertions which were utterly at variance with the views about the war mentioned earlier.

"Therefore did I afterwards remain at Arracan, waiting daily in the hope of hearing and understanding the reason of this; but I never could succeed in getting thoroughly to the bottom of it. Therefore, when I could only learn that on account of these two party men, war had commenced and the ancient friendship of the two nations had been destroyed, I returned from Arracan and on the way heard that the English had taken Rangoon, Martaban, Mergui and Tavay; and upon this... I received the King's orders to proceed and ascertain the causes of this proceeding, and to find out from the English way they had devastated our provinces.

"In obedience to this order, I arrived in (Hsinbyugyun) and with the view of obtaining correct information, despatched three chiefs... each in command of a division of the army... to proceed to Rangoon". . . . (In the Rangoon area) there was much fighting and many men wounded, which I have heard from the reports of the Chiefs, whom I sent down to command — Now, on hearing this I moved from (Hsinbyugyun) with my force, and arrived in (Danubyu)." <sup>51</sup>

Maha Bandula concluded by pleading with certain foreigners long resident in Burma and known to be in the British camp to provide him with an explanation of British motives in invading Burma.

Maha Bandula therefore left Arakan because he had failed to gain clarification of British actions, not because, as is assumed, he was recalled by the King in order to recapture Rangoon. In fact, he had heard of the capture of Rangoon only during his return from Arakan. Also, the King had not ordered him to drive out the British but instead "to proceed and ascertain the causes of this proceeding and to find out from the English why they had devastated our provinces." He had not

51 *Ibid.*



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gone to Rangoon himself, but had remained at Hsinbyuggun and sent three chiefs with troops to Rangoon to ascertain British motives. (Maha Bandula, apparently, saw nothing incongruous in sending an army to negotiate — any more than in sending one to demand refugees). While at Hsinbyuggun, he had heard that much fighting had occurred and he had proceeded towards Danubyu — instead of retreating to that place from Rangoon. The British material relating to the events at Rangoon and Danubyu needs to be re-examined in the light of these assertions.

Fighting broke out at Danubyu as well, and Maha Bandula was killed. Shortly before his death, he wrote another letter to the British which ran as follows: "In war we find each others' force; the two countries are at war for nothing and we know not each others' mind."<sup>52</sup> General Campbell, resentful at not having been addressed directly by Maha Bandula, had failed to communicate the peace terms; hence Maha Bandula's continued ignorance about British objectives.

Admittedly, even if negotiations had been held, the war could not have been ended straight away. The British demands were so major that the Court could not conceivably have acceded to them without a fight. As it was, when negotiations were finally held, later on in 1825, the Burmese refused to accept the British terms (now stiffer than before) and it was only the relentless advance of the British army towards the capital and further military defeats that caused them to accept the terms.

One can conclude by stating that the events discussed in this section have a special interest for the historian, for they show that he can sometimes understand a situation better than the actual participants.

52 J. J. Snodgrass, *Narrative of the Burmese War*, London, 1827, p. 172. The British found this letter obscure and questioned its bearer as to its purport. He stated that while he was not well informed about these matters, he believed that his chief wanted to make peace. The British were unwilling to believe this and threatened the messenger with punishment as a spy (i.e. execution). He then stated that it was believed in the camp that Maha Bandula intended to attack the British at the first opportunity, and conquer or perish in the attempt. He had realized that the British would only believe such testimony but his initial assertion was probably sincere.







## Early Land Revenue Experiments in the Holkar State, 1824-1886

BY

KALPANA GANGULY

The earliest account of the land revenue system of the Holkar State is available in Sir John Malcolm's 'Memoir of Central India' published in 1824. The system then prevailing in the Holkar State was analogous to the Raiyatwari system prevailing at that time in the Deccan provinces of the British Empire. Under this system the control of the village and the collection of rents was entrusted to a hereditary Patel. He was remunerated by the grant of a Watan.<sup>1</sup>

The Patel was assisted in his work by the Patwari. The village waste was also at the disposal of the State. Under this system, the primary claim of each cultivator to his holding was recognised and he was held directly responsible for the rent assessed by the state. It differed from the Raiyatwari system of British India in one respect.<sup>2</sup> In British India, the raiyat was recognised practically as the proprietor of the holding with unrestricted rights of transfer. However, in the Holkar State, as in the other princely States, the ruler was the universal landlord and the cultivators his tenants. As a consequence, their rights of transfer were liable to definite limitations and their assessment was the rent they paid to the State in the capacity of tenants of the ruler.<sup>3</sup> The alienation of holdings was allowed only for a limited term, that too under special sanction and on the payment of a fee or Nazrana to the ruler of the State. The revenue system of the Holkar State, therefore, could at best be called the Khalsa system.<sup>4</sup>

1 Customary rights and privileges, chief being the right to enjoy free of assessment a certain area of cultivable land.

2 C. U. Wills, *The Land System of the Holkar State*, p. 4.

3 Baden Powell, *Village Communities in India*, p. 144.

4 Though the power of alienation had been withheld from the raiyat in the villages of Central Provinces, I allude here to the standard raiyatwari system of the Deccan. The system prevailing in the Holkar State cannot thus be called



The importance of the Patel and Patwari declined when the Ijaradari system was introduced in the Holkar State. It is difficult to say conclusively when this system was brought into vogue. Perhaps it was introduced in the first two decades of the nineteenth century, at a time when marital exploits claimed the paramount interests of the Holkars.<sup>5</sup> In this period of uncertainty revenue-farmers or contractors called Ijaradars were given the responsibility for the collection of revenue assessed on the individual villages or groups of villages. Sometimes whole mahals or even districts were leased out to them. The assessment was made on the basis of the averages obtained in the previous years. The Ijaradars had the right of making charges in the holdings, independently of the State assessment. Pattas or leases were given to the Ijaradars for a period of eleven years. They were renewed after that.<sup>6</sup> The amount payable by the Ijaradars was increased after every term.<sup>7</sup> It was his duty to collect the revenue and pay it to the State treasury. He was remunerated by the grant of watan and certain dues or haqq. An Ijaradar was not allowed to enhance the rent fixed at the time of settlement on the cultivable area, though he often had a share in the profits of the newly cultivated lands. Abandoned holdings usually came to the Ijaradars who could sub-let them on an increased rent. Under the Ijaradari system, transfer of holdings was legislated all over the State. Such transfers were, however, common only in the Nimar-district of the Holkar State.<sup>8</sup>

It is worth mentioning that Ijaradari system in the Holkar dominion had a close similarity with the arrangement in vogue at Nagpur in 1853. After its escheat to the British in that year, the Malguzari system prevailing in the Central Provinces was introduced there.

The Ijaradari system, though it was the only alternative, and the time of its introduction "soon resulted in the degeneration of both the soil and the farmers. For the tenure of the Ijaradars being of a limited duration, they tried to extract as much as possible out of the poor ryots, without spending a single pie on the improvement of the soil."<sup>9</sup> The

raiyatwari for that epithet has a very definite technical connotation derived from British India. See C. U. Wills, *op.cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>5</sup> *Indore Mahal Settlement Report*, 1904, p. 101.

<sup>6</sup> Rampur Kothi Records. Circular No. S-R, 15th August, 1867.

<sup>7</sup> V. K. Kunte, *Notes on Indore Administration*, p. 113.

<sup>8</sup> *Old Settlement Report*, 1904, p. 39.

<sup>9</sup> *Indore Mahal Settlement Report*, 1904, p. 107.



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State meticulously realised the revenue from the Ijaradars but the condition of the ryot continued to deteriorate owing to oppression.<sup>10</sup> The system was subversive of any healthy village organization. The Ijaradar was a parasite on both the State and the ryot. On the other hand, the unrestricted right of cultivators to transfer their holdings was an accentuating cause of rural indebtedness.<sup>11</sup> When it was given away for non-agricultural purposes, it went against the interest of both the state revenue and agriculture as a whole. Indebtedness and agrarian unrest became rampant.<sup>12</sup> Some limitation on the powers of the Ijaradar or some sort of state control was the crying need of this system.<sup>13</sup>

At the time of the accession of Tukojirao II in June, 1844, the Ijaradari system with its manifold ills was prevalent in the Holkar State. Owing to the political intrigues and political uncertainty of the past few years, the general situation had deteriorated further.<sup>14</sup> During the minority of Tukojirao, the Council of Regency did not carry out any changes in the revenue system. The British Resident reported in 1847: "Since the time of Harirao, no increase in revenue has been demanded. The old leases (of Ijaradars) have been renewed on the same terms. The farmers know that they are secure provided they fulfil their obligations."<sup>15</sup> The parganas of Betma, Depalpur, Mahidpur, Samair and Rampura were reported to be quite well-off.<sup>16</sup>

After assuming ruling powers in 1852, Tukojirao II renewed the ijara leases for another three years. During this period he made an intensive study of the prevailing land system and discovered that the revenue fixed was more in comparison to the total area under cultivation. This was readjusted and leases renewed for another eleven years i.e., up to 1865. The assessment was increased by six paise per rupee for the

10 *Ibid.*, p. 29.

11 *Report of the Famine Commission*, 1900. H. Culvert in the Wealth of Punjab rightly opines "When an ignorant and improvident peasantry can dispose, without restriction the valuable rights in land, the cultivators sink deeper into debt and their property slips from their hands."

12 C. U. Wills, *op.cit.*, p. 6.

13 Baden Powell, 'Land Systems of British India', I, p. 232. Such limitations were found in Chamba, Kashmir. "Respect for the occupancy rights of old cultivators existed, but they did not allow alienation without permission and payment of a fee or nazrana to the chief."

14 M. W. Burway, *Life of Tukojirao II* (Indore, 1927).

15 Papers from India Office Records, XXVI, p. 6252, Report from Hamilton to Secy. G.O.I.

16 *Ibid.*



first five years and an increment of twelve paises per rupee for the remaining six years. In 1864-65, the above mentioned leases to the Ijaradars were about to expire. In the same year, Tukojirao introduced a new settlement on an experimental basis. It was called 'The Settlement of 1864'. While the Ijara system was retained in some areas,<sup>17</sup> the Khalsa system was re-introduced in others.<sup>18</sup> Where a pargana was held under the Ijara system, its chief revenue officer was called the Kamavisdar, while under the Khalsa his designation was changed to Amin.<sup>19</sup> Wherever the Khalsa system was introduced, realisation of revenue was made directly from the cultivators or tenants through the Patwari who was the local residing agent for each village. He was assisted by the Patel. The Amin had supervisory powers over both the Patwari and the Patel.

Under the new settlement, in which both Khalsa and Ijara prevailed all cultivable land was leased out for fifteen years.<sup>20</sup> All cultivable land was measured and mapped roughly by the survey department by ropes. This system of measurement by rope was called the Kardhap system. Extensive irrigation works were also undertaken in connection with the settlement. The total demand assessed for the whole State at this settlement amounted to Rs. 37.9 lakhs but this figure was tentative.<sup>21</sup>

When the survey was completed, one survey clerk was sent to each pargana to explain to the Amin or Kamavisdar the survey-papers connected with his area. The Amin or Kamavisdar then prepared an abstract statement showing the revenue of the whole pargana. The survey and assessment of Bijagarh was the first to be completed.<sup>22</sup> Anticipating that the ryots might be dissatisfied by the new experiment, Tukojirao II called the leading cultivators of every pargana, explained to them the new Jamabandi, discussed pros and cons with them and sent them convinced. In 1884 Holkar made a personal tour of the districts of Rampura-Dhanpura with the object of making an on-the-spot

17 Ijaradari flourished in the Holkar State till 1908. It was declared illegal by the Settlement of 1908. However, it continued to flourish in Nemar and Bhikangaon till 1916.

18 Papers from India Office Records, XXVI, p. 6253.

19 Kunte, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

20 Holkar State Records (Revenue) Vol. E, Basta No. 23, Vol. H. Basta No.

42. These contain details of the leases of the Ijardars of different Mahals.

21 Dhariwal, *Indore State Gazetteer*, I, 1931, p. 290.

22 Kunte, *op. cit.*, p. 116.



enquiry preparatory to the new land settlement. Only after this, the new settlement was introduced in the key-districts of Indore, Mahidpur, Nimawar and Rampura.<sup>23</sup> Attempts were made to end the high-handedness of the Patels and Ijaradars by keeping strict vigilance on their activities. The old customary system of their remuneration was also modified. For every hundred bighas of land in the villages, the Patel in Khalsa villages was given two bighas of land as Khoti i.e., free of assessment. The order was not, however, uniformly carried out in every part of the State. In Nimawar district, for example, no Khoti land was given to the Patel. Similarly, in the Ijara villages, the Ijaradar was entrusted with the task of collecting revenue strictly according to the rent-roll. His commission of  $12\frac{1}{2}\%$  was also fixed.<sup>24</sup> They were held responsible for the payment of arrears. At the Mahal level, the kind or daily cash book had to be maintained and the balance struck. The Amin, Vahiwardar, and Patels were to check and sign the kind daily.<sup>25</sup>

Another cess called the Sardeshmukhi was introduced in this settlement. It was 7% on the rent paid by the cultivator. Sometimes, Siwai Jumma or extra revenue was also levied. It was not to be spent on the mahals but to be credited to the State treasury.<sup>26</sup> Extraordinary or occasional taxes called zasti patti or one year's cess were also levied. If they were continually levied for more than a year, they were incorporated in the Siwai revenue. By 1866-67 ten out of the forty-five parganas in the State were surveyed and settled.<sup>27</sup>

The 1864 settlement was an advance over the previous assessments in many ways. Firstly, while under the old system, the cultivators only knew the total amount of revenue assessed on their Khatas or holdings, now every cultivator came to know the rate of which each bigha of land was assessed. Under the old system only the *cultivated* area was assessed but under the new settlement 10-15% of the *cultivable* land was allowed free for purpose of fallow and charnoi or as grazing land and the rest was taxed. This increased the

23 *Ibid.*, p. 116.

24 Dhariwal, *op.cit.*, p. 298.

The actual fee of collection was 10% plus 2 1/2% for village expenses like festivals, stationery, temporary staff etc.

25 Rampur Kothi Records Revenue Circular 3 dated 29 June 1870.

26 Rampur Kothi Records Circular No. 7-R dated 5 Nov., 1868.

27 Central India Agency Report, 1966-67.



share of the State revenue. The karab or waste land was not assessed even now. The second benefit was that the land revenue was more than doubled in every pargana. Thirdly, high-handedness of the Kamavisdars, Ijaradars and Amins was reduced. Their irregular profits were banned. The raiyat seldom now suffered by these officers. In many years, the Rampura amin was the only officer who amassed great wealth and got into difficulty. He was, however, brought to book by Tukoji-rao II.<sup>28</sup> The Central India Agency Report 1865-66 opined that the revenue department of the Holkar State was the best administered and absorbed much of the chief's attention.<sup>29</sup>

The settlement had several drawbacks. The fields were not systematically classified on the quality of soils and the levy of land revenue was not, therefore, proportionate to the productive capacity of the soil. The Kardhap system of measuring by ropes was also not scientific. The land revenue was more than doubled in many parganas and was regarded by the ryots as being unduly heavy.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, imposition of the Sardeshmukhi, Sawai-jumma and zasti-patti fell heavily on the people. There was a good deal of dissatisfaction amongst the people at the advanced rates proposed.<sup>31</sup> "The Durbar is continually pressed to lower the assessment of this or that village or district and compelled to allow remissions arising from ordinary seasonal occurrences. The whole population is thus on the strain."<sup>32</sup> In the beginning, people unused to regular assessment of this sort clamoured, so much so that in the parganas of Narayangarh, Khargone and Rampura several cultivators left the State and migrated to Rajputana. In Sawer the people suspended sowing. In fact the protests of the cultivators were so widespread and pronounced that the Maharaja himself toured the districts with a view to allaying the general dissatisfaction. He discussed the matter personally with the villagers. The important villagers were summoned to Indore from time to time to discuss matters with the ruler. Slight concessions to the dissatisfied parties were made.<sup>33</sup>

28 Papers from India Office Records, XXVI, p.6248.

29 Central India Agency Report, 1865-66.

30 According to Mackay, the revenue in 1845 amounted to Rs. 22,12,000. In 1877-78 it had risen sharply to Rs. 51,23,000. *Vide* V, K. Kunte, *op.cit.*, p.135.

31 Central India Agency Report, 1865-66, p. 25.

32 *Ibid.*, 1870-71, p. 5.

33 *Ibid.*, 1866-67. Also Former Holkar State Revenue Department Records 1876-86 of Maheshwar reveal that owing to the harsh assessment people of Tuluka Salkheda fled. The Patel was issued orders that all possible efforts should be made to allay the fears of the ryots and rehabilitate them. State Archives, Bhopal.



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In 1867-68 ten more districts were settled. This brought a total of twenty districts under the settlement. Final distribution of leases was not completed, possibly from an anxiety on the part of the Durbar to ascertain whether the rates could be actually realised or not. The settlement continued to be viewed with disfavour — a mutual lack of confidence was the stumbling block.<sup>34</sup>

The efforts of the Maharaja for assisting his raiyat remained unflinching. He kept an eye on the market price which formed a guide for what the land could bear. So long as the prices remained constant, the assessment could stand — should there be a fall it would be graduated accordingly and vice-versa. The Maharaja told the Resident in 1869: "It was the abruptness of the rise not its injustice which caused the outcry amongst the people ... You think and hear much of my unpopularity that is not worth thinking about. No rule is popular, I know none that is."<sup>35</sup> Cynical, but true.

The unpopularity of the settlement continued unabated. In 1870-71, over hundred inhabitants of Tarana sought the intervention of the British Political Agent, Augur. The Amin of Tarana was summoned to Indore to discuss the grievances with the ruler.<sup>36</sup> The fact remains that Tukojirao II was uncompromising and stern in protecting the interest of the State but he never was found lacking in all-eviating the suffering of his subjects.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, he had a different perspective.

Once an officer spoke to His Highness about the balance drawn from year to year by the Patels. Tukojirao retored: "Never mind. The ryot is mine and the balance is also mine. If good times come the balance will be realised. If not, the Kisans will certainly not be tortured. Let the Kisan know that there is burden on their heads,

<sup>34</sup> Central India Agency Report, 1867-68.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 1869-70, p.7.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 1870-71. Appendix D P XVII.

<sup>37</sup> An interesting anecdote illustrates the above point. The resident met a banker and asked whether the people were happier under Scindhia or Holkar. He said "Scindhia's ryots are liberally treated and hold lands on terms which enable them to prosper, but they are harassed by numerous Mutsudders (officials). With Holkar, it is otherwise. His terms are tight. He does not allow anybody but the Ijardar or Amin between him and the settlement." When this anecdote was related the former laughingly admitted that he allowed nobody to touch his subjects but himself. *Vide Central India Agency Report, 1869-70.*



so that they work more and earn more to benefit themselves and my State. Necessity will make the Kissan work hard.”<sup>38</sup> Punishment in case of forgery or default was severe. “If a ryot refused to pay the demands on him, he was confined in the village chauki, exposed to the Sun and prevented from eating or drinking. This punishment was more resorted to exacting extraordinary than regular revenue. If a whole village resisted, the Patel or Amin was selected as victim.”<sup>39</sup>

The Settlement of 1864–65 was dubbed as “the crying evil of the Holkar Government” by the British Resident in 1875. He further reported that “His Highness is not to be persuaded from the path which he has chosen and which he rigorously pursues.”<sup>40</sup>

The Settlement was not as unjust or so harsh as it was generally regarded. It cut the benefits of the Ijaradars and Patels and was hence unpopular with them. They fanned public discontent against the ruler and did their best to discredit him in the public eyes. The villagers who had become accustomed to these officials believed what they said. Moreover, the purpose of the Settlement was defeated by the vagaries of nature. The weather remained unfavourable for continuously many years together. Output declined, prices rose.<sup>41</sup> Like Firoz Tuglaq’s experiment in the Doab, this Settlement too was unfortunately introduced at the wrong hour.

In 1876 a revision survey was undertaken to remove the shortcomings of the previous Settlement. In doubtful cases the area was rectified by the Kardhap survey and some cases by the Shanku (cross-staff and chain) survey. Maps were prepared for the first time on the basis of measurements and some attempt at regular classification of land was made. But it turned out to be rough and unscientific.<sup>42</sup> In the same year the *Istomorari Rules* (1876) were introduced. These granted certain privileges and rights to the ryots by way of concession. Taccavi advances were made available to the cultivators on easy terms. Bullocks, agricultural implements and houses could be purchased by

38 *Central India Agency Report*, 1872.

39 *Ibid.*, 1875–76, p. 6.

40 *Ibid.*

41 *Central India Agency Report* of the relevant years. The season of 1876–77 was bad to crops, especially maize and opium. Vide *Report on the Administration of Indore State* by P. M. Raghunatharao, 1876–77.

42 *Central India Agency Report*, 1877–78, p. CIXXIV.



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financial aid available. Tukojirao himself toured some parganas and sent the Prime Minister Raghunatharao to gauge public feelings. The privileges were availed of. In 1877, 23 ryots had taken financial assistance under the above mentioned rules.<sup>43</sup> In the same year Jamabandi was extended to Sower, Nemawar and Chikalda.<sup>44</sup> In 1879-80 the Jamabandi was completed in Kaitha and Parana while that of Rampura Garote, Manasa, Chandwasa, Nundiwai, Mahidpur and Khargone was in progress.<sup>45</sup>

A new Settlement was introduced in 1881 on the basis of the revision of the former Kardhap maps and partly on the basis of the 'Shanku System'. Maps were prepared to a scale of 32 inches to a mile. A chain measuring 33 feet and a cross-staff were used. The unit of measurement was the bigha and was equal to 5/8th of an acre. The revenue assessed in 1880-82 was Rs. 65 lakhs.

For the purpose of assessment the land was divided into three categories:

- (a) Land yielding Kharif crops
- (b) Land yielding Rabi crops
- (c) Land yielding Rabi and Kharif crops in alternate years. The rates for the third kind of land were the highest, while those of the first kind were the lowest. In some places land was classified according to fertility. One serious shortcoming of the previous settlement was thus rectified. The revision settlement was completed in 1880-01 and was guaranteed to last for fifteen years.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Report on the Administration of Indore by Raghunatharao, for the year 1877-78.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* Former Holkar State, Revenue Department. Files dealing with land cases of 1877 report that the Patels had not completed the measurement of lands and no reports were received by the Revenue Department. The Durbar asks for speedy action.

<sup>45</sup> Memorandum on Administration of Indore State 1290 Fasli (1880-81) by Khooman Singh.

<sup>46</sup> Indore Mahal Settlement Report, 1904, p. 30.



Several new cesses were introduced like sarak cess or road cess which equalled three pies per rupee of the assessed revenue of a holding. Sardeshmukhi and Jasti Kharch were retained. New cesses called Pau Anni and Adhi Anni per rupee were collected from certain paraganas. What was it spent on, remains obscure. Tulai or weighing cess, char jhopadi or ground rent, balai-lag or sutcharsa levied from balais or chamara on the skins of dead animals cured by them, teli-kant or cess on oil-pressing mills, tolsinghar, on singara crop, banchari or grazing dues and gadhari-lag or cess on shepherds were the other new cesses imposed under the settlement. The additional revenue was spent on the construction of tanks and wells. Old ones were repaired at a cost of sixteen lakhs. Under the new Settlement, the total revenue demand rose to Rs. 48,64,623.<sup>47</sup>

In 1881-82, the Maharaja visited Rampura, the granary of the Holkar State and also Bhanpura, Garote, Chandwasa and Maheswar to conduct an on-the-spot study.<sup>48</sup> The Indore Mahal was surveyed in 1881. Following the new survey the number of Sarkari villages in the Mahal was reduced from 326 to 197.<sup>49</sup> The new Jamabandi affected an increase of 9,716 bighas or seven biswas in the cultivable area and Rs. 7,85-14-3 in the assessment. In one year, the Sardeshmukhi revenue rose from Rs. 17,952-4-9 to Rs. 22,584-12-9, i.e., a staggering 500 per cent. Similar increases were found in other Mahals.

In 1882-83, the survey of Mahidpur, Khargone, Rampura, Bhanpura, Garote, Manasa, Chandwasa, Raipur, Jirapur, Machhalpur, Sunel and Kathod were completed.<sup>50</sup> In the following year, Bijagarh and Tarana were surveyed.<sup>51</sup> Orders were issued to the district revenue officers to submit statements regarding fresh lands brought under cultivation.<sup>52</sup>

The assessment failed on several fronts. The land was cultivated

47 Indore State Gazetteer, III, p. 165. Table No. XXVII. It was 37, 97, 100 from 1865-79. Districtwise figures are not available.

48 Memorandum of Fasli-year 1291-92 i.e., 1881-82.

49 Settlement Report of Indore Mahal by Moulvi Syed Ali Nasan 1904, p. 35. Formerly, the Indore Mahal included Indore, Khundel and Mhow of the 326 villages 41 were Khasgi, 44 Jagira and 241 doulat or Sarkari villages.

50 Memorandum of Fasli 1293 in Report on Indore Administration of that year.

51 Memorandum of Fasli 1294 by Nana Maroji.

52 Rampur Kothi Records, Holkar Sirkar Gazetteer. 18 May, 1885.



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not more than two or three times between 1881-1886. The raiyat suffered heavily.<sup>53</sup> No care was taken to evaluate whether the holder was capable of paying the enhanced amount, which was three to four times higher than the previous assessment. The raiyat obviously could not pay it. "The balance of land revenue which remains to be collected is above 1/5th of the demand... A wise administrator should at once reduce the demand by 1/5th and adjust the existing unequal taxation."<sup>54</sup> The Minister also suggested the abolition of several cesses. Owing to frequent alterations in the assessments, it had become impossible for the Patels to maintain Khatiwaris or register of holdings. Permanency and moderation which are the sine-quo-non of any settlement were the need of the hour. The British Resident had full faith in the good intentions and capability of Tukojirao II, but before matters could be rectified he expired in 1886.

Undoubtedly, Tukojirao "was an astute ruler capable of estimating accurately the paying power of the ryots — pressure was applied to a certain point, then relaxed."<sup>55</sup> At the same time, he was a hard taskmaster, uncompromising in his attitude. He was not easily disheartened. The British Resident and the educated merchant never doubted his sincerity of purpose and concern for the welfare of his subjects. It was the ignorant and the uneducated farmer who fell a victim to the machinations of the cunning middle-man and frustrated his moves.

Tukojirao's revenue experiments were an important milestone in the history of the land systems in the State. Prior to his reign, no effort was made to carry out a systematic study of the subject. Several ills from which the farmers were suffering were removed. The revenue of the State multiplied by leaps and bounds. The two settlements of 1864 and 1881 paved the way for more experiments in the future.

<sup>53</sup> *Indore Mahal Settlement Report*, p. 37.

<sup>54</sup> *Central India Agency*, 1886-87, pp. 113-18. Memorandum on the Administration of the State from 1866-67 submitted to the ruler.

<sup>55</sup> Report of Agent, Central India to the G. G. 1882-83.







## British Relations with the Native State of Cambay, 1858-1900: A Study in Modernization

BY

MAKRAND J. MEHTA

The nature of the British economic, political, and social impact on India has remained a controversial and exciting theme of Indian historiography since the beginning of the nineteenth century or even earlier. The theme has attracted the Indian and the British scholars and administrators for academic and pragmatic reasons, and even today historians have been digging the past to understand and evaluate the nature of the British impact on Indian society. After the British established themselves as the sovereign power in India at various periods of time, they evolved relationship with the princely states in such a legalistic way and with such sophistication and skills that the ruling chiefs increasingly found themselves playing subservient role in the development of their states. By and large, they tended to serve the political and economic interests of the British paramount power. Often the relationship between the native princes and the British was that of a client and a patron. This paper traces the relationship which existed between the native state of Cambay and the English during the period 1858-1900. It suggests that the period of peace and political stability was not marked by the general prosperity of the people of Cambay.

Cambay was a flourishing port-town with a large hinterland in ancient and medieval times.<sup>1</sup> Though it had considerably declined during the Mughal period, it was still an important port with a trading and manufacturing net-work. Like other major urban centres of Gujarat, Cambay received set-backs on account of the frequent battles and wars following the decline of the Mughal Empire in the eighteenth century. Taking advantage of this situation, Momin Khan I, one of the Governors of Mughal Gujarat, established his independent authority over

1 Ratnamanirao Bhimarao Jote, *Khambhatno Itihas*, (Ahmedabad, 1935).



Cambay and the neighbouring regions and founded the dynasty of the independent Nawabs around 1733.<sup>2</sup>

The Nawabs, however, did not find it easy to rule their state on account of the uncertain periods of wars between the English East India Company and the Maratha Powers. The English victory over the Peshwa in 1802 gave them the right to collect revenues from Cambay.<sup>3</sup> The establishment of the British rule in Gujarat in 1818 tended to increase their influence, if not the actual hold, on the nawabs of Cambay. But as the things developed, the Nawabs found themselves obliged to enter into a series of treaties and engagements with the English, until the latter started treating Cambay as a "friendly state"; the English accorded it the dignity of a "salute of eleven guns", and also recognized the rights of the Nawabs to succession in 1862.<sup>4</sup>

The Cambay Nawabs were by no means enlightened rulers. They often oppressed their subjects and ruled almost arbitrarily. But the things began to change when, under the general superintendence of the Collector of the neighbouring district of Kheda (who was the political Agent of Cambay), the state adopted certain policies which led to the establishment of the primary and secondary schools, hospitals, and municipal administration, particularly since 1880.<sup>5</sup> The judicial administration was modernized. Except serious cases tried by the Nawab in person all ordinary criminal charges were heard in the Cambay town by City Magistrate and Kotwal, and in the district by the rural magistrates called the *Darogas*. Cases which required severe punishments were referred to the Nawabs who also heard criminal appeals. The Munshi who carried on correspondence with the Political Agent of Kheda was a link between the Nawab and the Bombay Government.<sup>6</sup> Before 1871 Cambay did not have a postal system. The post office was established in the Cambay town in the 1870's. It was under the charge of the Inspector of the Post Offices, Gujarat Division.<sup>7</sup> Cambay State did not have any railway line even after

2 Bombay Government, *Gazetteer of the Presidency: Rawakantha*, Vol. VI, (Bombay, 1878), pp. 222-233. Henceforth cited as *Bombay Gazetteer*.

3 *Ibid.*, pp. 228-233.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 233.

5 Narmadashanker T. Bhatt, *Khambhatnun Sankretika Darshan* (Cambay, 1974.), p. 56.

6 *Ibid.*

7 *Bombay Gazetteer, op. cit.*, pp. 235-238.



the British districts were linked by the Bombay Baroda and Central India Railway since 1863. In fact, it was not until 1903 that Cambay town was linked with the Petlad and the Tarapur taluks. Before 1903, Cambay sent its runners to Petlad, Kheda and Anand to send the mails to the various parts of the country.<sup>8</sup>

The official Gazetteers thus inform us about the process of modernization which ushered in Cambay under the general superintendence of the Bombay Government. The establishment of a High School and its inauguration by Lord Raey, the Governor of Bombay in 1884, the establishment of a hospital, named after Kanady, the Special Political Agent of Cambay, in 1893, the Victoria Diamond Jubilee Hospital inaugurated in 1898 by the Collector of Kheda, and the setting up of a clock tower in Cambay in 1891 (the Jaferali Tower) were the measures calculated to introduce reforms in the native territories.<sup>9</sup> There was an increase in the number of boys and girls going to school. The growth of education and the administrative modernization was, after all, a general phenomenon, and the native states could hardly ignore what was taking place in the British territories.

It therefore follows that the British relationship with the native states can be more fruitfully studied in terms of the economic impact, and in this respect the rule of the native chiefs, with a few exceptions, was not less irresponsible to the popular wishes than the British rule. The government of Cambay, for instance, did not take positive steps to stimulate trade and industries, with the result that the indigenous craftsmen including the indigo planters, textile manufacturers, and the manufacturers of the agate goods for which Cambay had been famous since the fifteenth century, were migrating to Bombay, Ahmedabad, and other parts of India.<sup>10</sup> This was in sharp contrast to the policies adopted by the Gaekwad of Baroda whose policies led to the development of trade and industries.<sup>11</sup> Though the Nawab possessed three-

8 C. U. Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads relating to India and Neighbouring Countries*, Vol. VII, (Calcutta, 1931), p. 3, (Introduction).

9 Jugalbhai Pandya, *Khambhat Shaherno Itihas*, (Khambhat, 1899), pp. 61-62.

10 For Akik Industry see Government of India, *Census of India 1961, Selected Crafts of Gujarat: Agati Industry of Gajarat*, Vol. V, Pt. VII-A (1) (Ahmedabad, 1964). For migration see, Bombay Gazetteer, *op.cit.*, pp. 203-204.

11 For the Policies of the Gaikwad Government see Stanley Rice, *Sayajirao III Maharaja of Baroda*, (Oxford, 1929).



small ships, they were meant for bringing luxurious commodities for his court and palace requirements. The royal vessels contained excellent accommodation for European cabin passengers.<sup>12</sup> It seems that the Royal vessels were meant for luxurious life and not for trading operations. The traditional sailors of Cambay also underwent rapid deterioration. Very few of the Kharvas (sea-farers) were sailors, and the fame of Cambay manufacturers had long passed away.<sup>13</sup>

The state of agriculture was not less deplorable. In 1856 Edward Thornton had accounted this phenomenon to the Nawab's oppressive policies.<sup>14</sup> In 1872 the total population of Cambay state was 83,494; 85 per cent being Hindus and 14 per cent Muslims.<sup>15</sup> The state comprised 88 villages and only one town, namely Cambay, with a population of 30,000. The condition of the peasants, mostly the Kanbis, Kolis, Rajputs, Garagias, and Muslims, was deplorable in spite of a long period of peace, and the cultivation of tobacco, cotton and indigo was on the decline. The cultivation of opium and poppy was prohibited under the agreement with the British Government. The British officials looked to the Nawab's land revenue policy with indifference. "The Nawab pays little attention to the land revenue", the Gazetteer observed, "and, as a rule, its management is loose rather than oppressive. In the villages assigned to the Nawab's son's, there may be occasional oppression, but in these cases complaints do not reach the Nawab. On the whole, the assessment is by no means heavy and its collection is not so irksome as to make the people move to the neighbouring Kaira Villages."<sup>16</sup>

The fact was that, like the British revenue system, the Nawab's system was harsh. The peasants had frequently complained that even during the periods of famines since the 1870's the Nawab was exacting high land revenue from them.<sup>17</sup> This phenomenon reached its climax when the peasants launched an organized agitation against the Nawab in September 1890 and forced Nawab Jafar Ali Khan to flee to the

12 Bombay Gazetteer, *op.cit.*, p. 181.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 198.

14 Edward Thornton, *A Gazetteer of the Territories Under the Government of the East India Company and the Native States of The Continent of India*, Vol. I, (London, 1854), pp. 248-249.

15 Imperial Gazetteer of India, *op. cit.*, p. 294.

16 Bombay Gazetteer, *op.cit.*, p. 235.

17 For details see Bombay Government, *Papers relating to the Survey-Settlement of the Cambay State by T.R. Fernandez* (Bombay, 1893) pp. 1-49.



British territories.<sup>18</sup> The rioters occupied Cambay town. The Nawab appealed to the Bombay Government for help. The Political Agent of Cambay lost little time in sending his troops to Cambay. But the aggrieved peasants refused to disperse until their grievances were heard and removed. The troops therefore used guns, killed several peasants, and restored law and order. This event eventually led to the inquiry which exposed the "bankruptcy and general mismanagement" of the Nawab's government.<sup>19</sup>

The *Bombay Gazetteer* has described this event as a mere "riot", and surprisingly enough, indigenous writers have failed to bring out the real significance of this event from the peasants' point of view.<sup>20</sup> In fact, a monumental Gujarati book on Cambay, published in 1934 has described the period 1880 - 1900 as the "period of peace and social progress."<sup>21</sup> But it was during this period that the peasants of Cambay State and those inhabiting the territories of British Gujarat had experienced the severities of a series of famines. This period was also marked by the apparently growing friendly relations, or in fact the patron-client type of relations, between the British and the Nawab. The active assistance given by the Bombay government to help the Nawab in crushing the peasant revolt shows the type of relationship which had emerged between the English and the native state. Both the rules seem to be equally exploitative, as they tended to maximise the land revenue dues without helping the peasants to be prosperous and irrespective of the latter's ability to pay the revenue. In terms of commerce and manufactures also, the policies of the British and the Nawab of Cambay were anything but encouraging.

18 Aitchison, *op. cit.*, p. 28. Parliamentary Papers, House of Commons East India (Cambay disturbances). Copies of the extracts from correspondence relating to disturbances in the Native State of Cambay. Parliamentary Papers No. 156 of 1891. Return dated 13 March, 1891, pp. 1-60.

19 Aitchison, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-60.

20 Jote, *op. cit.*, Bhat, *op. cit.*, Pandya, *op. cit.*

21 Jote, *op. cit.*







## Early Indian Nationalism: Henry Cotton and the British Positivist and Radical Connection, 1870-1915\*

BY

EDWARD C. MOULTON

Henry J.S. Cotton (1845-1915) was one of the three remarkable British Indian Civil Service dissidents who identified with Indian nationalism during its formative phase and became active members of the Indian National Congress in their post-retirement years. Like his two colleagues, Allen O. Hume, who helped establish the Congress in 1885, and William Wedderburn, who was Chairman of its British Committee from 1890 to 1918, Cotton's pro-India sympathies were motivated partly by his belief in the universal applicability of liberal principles. But an even more important influence in the case of Cotton was his formal commitment to Positivism, the comprehensive philosophy of Auguste Comte, which held that all knowledge derived from observable phenomena, extended scientific methodology to the study of society, and enunciated a new Religion of Humanity.<sup>1</sup> In the political realm Positivism was totally committed to order and progress, based upon humanistic morality infused with love.<sup>2</sup> Especially as enunciated by the founder of organized Positivism in Britain, Richard Congreve (1818-1899), it embodied a strong criticism of colonialism and imperialism. It was this latter feature of Positivism, coupled with a certain veneration for Hindu

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1 Comte's Positivist ideas were expounded in *Cours de philosophie positive*, 6 tom. (Paris 1830-42), and *System de politique positive* (Paris, 1854). He provided his own precis in *A General View of Positivism*, trans. J. H. Bridges (London 1865). For a recent scholarly assessment of Positivism see W. M. Simon, *European Positivism in the Nineteenth Century* (New York, 1963).

2 According to Comte "the religious formula of Positivists (was) Love is our Principle, Order is our Basis, Progress our End." *Ibid.*, *A General View of Positivism*. Reprint ed. (New York, 1957), p. 431.



culture, which placed Cotton, as the sole British Positivist missionary in India in the later nineteenth century, in a position naturally sympathetic to the emerging Indian educated and political elite. By the same token Cotton was inevitably at odds much of the time with his British official superiors over the policies and goals of the Raj. Despite these tensions he remained a lifelong Positivist, though after retiring from the Indian Civil Service (I.C.S.) in 1902 the conservative features of Positivism were tempered by a strong and increasing commitment to liberal-radicalism. Elected to the Commons on a radical platform in 1906, Cotton was for the next four years the informal leader of a small group of Radical and Labour M.P.s who agitated strongly on India's behalf. His role in Parliament, together with his extensive use of the press and public platform to condemn Raj expansionism and repression, put him on a wavelength closer to younger, militant, Indian nationalists than many of the first generation of Indian or British supporters of Congress.

Neither of the pro-India trio of Hume, Wedderburn and Cotton has been the subject of extensive scholarly study. In the case of the former two, the recent historiography of Indian nationalism has at least accorded them some attention and recognition.<sup>3</sup> Cotton, however, has been practically ignored. Some passing attention has recently been given to his post-I.C.S. activities on behalf of India,<sup>4</sup> but the most substantive references to Cotton in contemporary scholarship are contained in Geraldine Forbes's pioneering study, *Positivism in Bengal* (South Asia Books, 1975). Forbes, who devotes only about a dozen pages to Cotton, confines her treatment to a brief account of his ideas about India, his role as a priest of the Religion of Humanity, and his links with Bengali Positivists. There is no discussion of his influence on Indian nationalism or his involvement in the Congress movement. In the absence of significant scholarly writing on Cotton, his own informative and still useful autobiography, *Indian and Home Memories* (London

3 For example, Brinton Martin's, *New India*, 1885 (Berkeley, 1969), and John R. McLane's, *Indian Nationalism and the Early Congress* (Princeton, 1977), both devote a full chapter to Hume. B. R. Nanda's, *Gokhale: the Indian Moderates and the British Raj* (Princeton, 1977), gives considerable attention to Wedderburn, as does Margot D. Morrow's London Ph.D. thesis, "The Origins and Early Years of the British Committee of the Indian National Congress, 1885-1907" (1977).

4 Morrow, *ibid.*, pp. 311 ff.; and E. C. Moulton, "British Radicals and India in the Early Twentieth Century," in *Edwardian Radicalism, 1900-1914* (ed. A. J. A. Morris, London, 1974), pp. 26-46.



1911), remains the only substantive published source on Cotton's unique and interesting career.

The purpose of this paper is to provide a critical appraisal of Cotton's involvement with Indian nationalism, and in particular to examine the role of Positivism, overlaid in later years by liberal-radicalism, in shaping his attitudes and actions concerning the Raj and India. The first part of the paper focuses on his I.C.S. career, examining in some detail his views on India's political and socio-economic development and showing the imprint of Positivism on them. Even though the Positivist socio-political creed was by no means uniformly radical, Cotton's writings and activities created tensions with his bureaucratic superiors. Special attention is devoted to the issue on which these tensions reached the breaking point, namely Cotton's reform efforts on behalf of the oppressed Indian tea plantation labourers of Assam during his term as Chief Commissioner of that province in the final years of his official career. The latter part of the paper focuses upon Cotton's role as a critic of the Raj and a leading advocate of Indian political and administrative reform after his retirement to Britain in 1902, and especially during his years as a Radical M. P. The examination of Cotton's career as an integrated whole leads me to question two theories about the Hume-Wedderburn-Cotton trio which are either explicit or implicit in much of the recent historiography of early Indian nationalism — namely, that they identified with Congress in their post-retirement years because of a sour-grapes attitude resulting from denial of high office, and, secondly, that they acted as a basically conservative and restraining influence on the Congress.<sup>5</sup> In the case of Cotton it is evident from the ensuing analysis that his interest in Indian nationalism dated from his conversion to Positivism in the 1870's and that in a number of important areas he was in advance of much of Congress 'moderate' opinion of his day.

Henry Cotton was born in Kumbhakonam, South Indies, to a family then in its third generation of Indian service and which, thanks to his mother, was strongly nonconformist. The product of a happy and secure childhood, Henry completed his schooling at Brighton College and then studied liberal arts for several years at King's College, London,

5. See, for example, Anil Seal, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism* (Cambridge, 1968), p. 270; Bradford Spangenberg, *British Bureaucracy in India*, (New Delhi, 1976), pp. 164-66 & 258-60; and B. L. Grover, *A Documentary Survey of British Policy Towards Indian Nationalism, 1885-1909* (Delhi, 1967), pp. 16-28.



before successfully competing in the I. C. S. public examinations in 1865. It was during these impressionable college years that Cotton became seriously interested in Positivism, to which he had first been alerted in 1864 by John Stuart Mill's critical essays on Comte.<sup>6</sup> Cotton was accordingly motivated to read Comte, and during the spring of 1867 attended Congreve's lectures on Positivism at the School of Humanity in London, along with such distinguished associates as George Eliot, Frederic Harrison and Professor E. S. Beesley. Central features of Positivist philosophy, such as the emphasis on science and progress combined with humanistic morality, undoubtedly appealed to Cotton. Later in 1867 Cotton married the beautiful Mary Ryan of Limerick, sailed for India, and, confidently assumed his position in the Bengal Civil Service. Amid the challenge of his work as an assistant officer in the district administration of rural Bengal and the excitement of establishing a family,<sup>7</sup> Cotton retained his interest in Positivism. By mid-1870 he had established contact with the one Positivist disciple then in Bengal administration, Samuel Lobb, a member of the Indian Educational Service since 1861 and Principal of Krishnagar College, 1869-74.<sup>8</sup> At the same time Cotton began corresponding regularly with Congreve and contributing to the Positivist subscription fund. From 1871 Positivism took on a more powerful personal dimension for Cotton, as he came under the influence of James C. Geddes, an I. C. S. official a few years his senior who converted to Positivism in 1870 and, as we shall see, used the creed as a departing point for a devastating indictment of the economic policies of the Raj. To Cotton, Geddes became a veritable guru, the "best friend" he ever had.<sup>9</sup> With Lobb's departure from India in 1874, Cotton and Geddes remained the sole Positivist missionaries responsible, as Cotton described it, for "practical study and solution" of the "great

6 [Cotton Biographical Resume], n.d., Cotton Collection, Microfilm Reel 1620 (India Office Library). Unless otherwise indicated all private papers cited are located at the India Office Library, London. Appearing initially in the *Westminster Review*, Mill's essays were then published in a book, *Auguste Comte Positivism* (London, 1865).

7 The Cottons had three sons, born between 1868 and 1874. His eldest son, Evan, later became a successful barrister in Calcutta and another, Julian, joined the I.C.S. in 1893.

8 [Lobb Biographical Resume], n.d., Congreve Papers, MS. Eng. lett. C. 183, F. 264 (Bodleian Library).

9 Cotton to Congreve, 10 March, 1880, Positivist Papers, Add. M.S. 45228 (British Library).



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problems of the relationship of the West with the East."<sup>10</sup> From 1880, when Geddes died prematurely at his rural East Bengal post, Cotton was left alone to carry on that formidable task.

In focusing upon the problems of East and West from a Positivist perspective, Cotton did not have to begin with an entirely blank sheet. Comte, it was true, gave little attention to India except in envisaging it as the "most open" Oriental civilization to Positivist regeneration because "theocracy... has suffered the least" there.<sup>11</sup> Comte further maintained that Brahmans had a "latent predisposition" in favour of Positivism which promised "to restore their social position whilst perfecting their moral nature and their mental organisation," and also held out the prospect of freeing "their theocratic country from all foreign dominion."<sup>12</sup> While elsewhere Comte was more categorical in his condemnation of colonialism,<sup>13</sup> it was left to British Positivists, especially Congreve, to give serious consideration to the problems of India and the Raj. As part of an evolving British Positivist preoccupation with foreign policy rather than domestic reform,<sup>14</sup> Congreve took advantage of the Indian rebellion of 1857 to condemn the Raj and particularly British "bloodthirstiness" in suppressing the uprising.<sup>15</sup> Convinced that the Empire was inherently "evil, both to England and to India," and accepting the Positivist injunction to "subordinate politics to morals," Congreve advocated that Britain

withdraw from ... its occupation of India without any unnecessary delay, ... and with such measures as shall be deemed advisable in the interest of Indian independence and good government.<sup>16</sup>

To this moral incident, Geddes, Cotton's close mentor, added an economic and cultural dimension. In a series of articles between 1871 and 1873, Geddes enunciated an attack on British-Indian financial and

10 Cotton to Crompton, 16 Oct. 1878, *ibid.*

11 Auguste Comte, *System of Positive Polity*. Reprint of 1877 ed. Vol. IV (New York, 1968), p. 447.

12 *Ibid.*, pp. 447-48.

13 *Ibid.*, pp. 433 & 452.

14 Geraldine Forbes, *Positivism in Bengal* (Columbia, Mo., 1975), p. 23.

15 Richard Congreve, *India*, A Pamphlet Published in 1857. Introduction by Syamaji Krishnavarma, (London, 1907), pp. 10-14.

16 *Ibid.*, pp. 1, 8 & 12.

17 James C. Geddes, *The Logic of Indian Deficit*, (London, 1871); *The Month*



economic policies more scathing than that of Karl Marx.<sup>17</sup> Whereas Marx had criticized the destruction of India's traditional handicraft industries,<sup>18</sup> Geddes argued that the Raj was impoverishing the peasant masses as well. India was saddled with an excessive and over-expensive administrative and military system. The combined effect of high taxation required to sustain the system and of declining agricultural production was the increased spectre of food shortages, "famine" and "pauperism".<sup>19</sup> This impoverishment of the Indian masses, Geddes blamed squarely upon British manufacturing and commercial interests who were the only classes which benefitted from imperialism. "A failure in Temporal matters," the Raj was also a disaster spiritually, for it undermined Indian cultural and socio-religious values without putting anything in their place.<sup>20</sup> Geddes's forthright verdict was that British rule rested upon a combination of "hard cash... sharp bayonets" and Indian disunion, and that Britain should concentrate on "reconstituting Native Governments ... with a view to speedy and peaceful liquidation of her Indian concern."<sup>21</sup>

Stimulated by Geddes and the encouraging phenomenon of having him and fellow disciples, Cotton and Lobb, all active in Bengal, Congreve took the occasion of his address on the Festival of Humanity, 1 January 1872, to reaffirm and further elucidate the Positivist position regarding India.<sup>22</sup> As a part of the reaffirmation he republished his controversial *India* pamphlet of 1857, with an editorial note emphasizing that he continued to stand by the "substance" of the analysis therein.<sup>23</sup> In his address he largely neglected economic issues, though his assertions that India was "poor" "ground down by a heavy taxation," and

of Gutenberg; or *Modern Industry* (London, 1871); and "Our Commercial Exploitation of the Indian Populations, *Calcutta Review*, LV (1872), pp. 340-81; LVI (1873), pp. 139-70 & 352-82.

18 Marx and Engels, *On Colonialism*, 4th ed., (Moscow, 1968), especially pp. 81-87.

19 Geddes, *The Logic of Indian Deficit*, *op. cit.*, p. vii.

20 *Ibid.*, p. viii.

21 *Ibid.*, pp. vi & ix.

22 Richard Congreve, *India: or Certain Moral and Social Questions Connected with Our Indian Empire* (London, 1872). Geddes first met Congreve in 1869, quickly accepted Positivism, and in 1870 married Congreve's sister-in-law, Emily Bury, in the first Positivist marriage ceremony in Britain. (Geddes Biographical Resume, n. d. Congreve Papers, MS. Eng. lett. C183, F. 202).

23 Richard Congreve, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

This was a reprint of Congreve's 1872 edition of the pamphlet.



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"hampered" in its material development by British rule suggests agreement on this score with Geddes.<sup>24</sup> In other areas he was as forthright as Geddes, denouncing the "government of the sword in India" as a violation of basic constitutional principles and a "fertile source of moral degradation."<sup>25</sup> For both moral and material reasons Positivists remained "unqualified" opponents of British "retention of India."<sup>26</sup> Consistent with this position, Congreve maintained that no Positivist should seek a career in India unless he were prepared to go there as a lifelong Positivist missionary and "adopt" the country "as his own for life and death."<sup>27</sup> But for Positivists, such as Cotton, Geddes and Lobb, who had become converts after embarking on I.C.S. careers, Congreve was more lenient. Their duty, Congreve ruled, was "quietly and unobtrusively . . . to aid in that which is the great aim of all Positivist policy, the smoothing of India's . . . transition from subjection to independence."<sup>28</sup> This challenging goal, Congreve believed, could only be achieved by the systematic promotion of the Religion of Humanity and of general Positivist ideas in India.

Congreve's restatement of Positivist ideas concerning India was fundamentally at odds with contemporary British establishment views concerning the nature and tenure of their rule. For Cotton and his two colleagues, conflicts and tensions between them and their bureaucratic superiors were inevitable. Even though Geddes, under pressure from Congreve against making "the Indian problem" his all-encompassing concern,<sup>29</sup> stopped publishing attacks on British rule after 1874, he continued to be shifted from job to job as a mark of official displeasure.<sup>30</sup> Congreve's injunctions for restraint had an influence on Cotton as well. When Cotton first went into print on the Raj in articles in London's influential *Fortnightly Review* in 1877 and 1878, it was as much in praise as criticism, emphasizing the improved security for persons and property as well as the increased material and social progress resulting

24 Congreve, *India or Certain Moral and Social Questions... op.cit.*, p. 19.

25 *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 19.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 23.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 29.

29 Congreve to Geddes, 13 March, 1873, Congreve Papers, MS. Eng. lett.c 183.

30 Forbes, *op. cit.*, p. 41.



from British rule.<sup>31</sup> He favoured an inquiry into the causes of famine, but the main problems which he highlighted were the racial gap between the rulers and the people and the discontent among Western-educated classes who were denied access to important administrative positions. Although his criticisms were innocuous, Cotton believed with some justification that he, like Geddes, was punished for his Positivist beliefs by being posted to the remote and underdeveloped district of Chittagong in 1878.<sup>32</sup> The one consolation for Cotton was that Geddes was appointed to nearby Bakerganj. But tragedy ensued, for Geddes soon succumbed to fever, so prevalent in that area of Bengal, and died there in 1880.

Cotton was devastated by Geddes's death. Not until three years later, when filled with a new sense of hope by the reformist policies of the Gladstonian-Liberal Viceroy, Lord Ripon, did Cotton again air his views about India and the Raj. Taking his cue from Geddes and Congreve he forthrightly enunciated his ideas in a major address to the London Positivist Society in 1883, entitled "England and India." This address was published later that year and in 1885 Cotton expanded it into a new book, *New India or India in Transition*, which he dedicated to Ripon. These publications thrust Cotton, still a lower ranking officer in the Bengal government secretariat in Calcutta, into the publicity limelight in India and to a lesser extent in Britain.

Cotton's two publications were thoroughly Positivist in inspiration. Based on his first hand experience, including his close association with sections of the new Bengali elite, Cotton's objectives were to highlight the great "political, social, and religious" changes occurring in India and to encourage the "more reasonable and more irresistible" popular aspirations evoked by the development of English education.<sup>33</sup> Believing like Congreve and Geddes in the theoretical immorality of foreign imperial rule and recognizing the "injustice of the English conquest," Cotton nevertheless considered that British internal administration in India deserved credit for a number of "enlightened measures for the welfare, education, and political training of the people."<sup>34</sup> At the same

31 Cotton, "Has India Food for its People," and "The Prospects of Moral Progress in India," *Fortnightly Review*, 1877 and '78, pp. 863-77 & 388-98, respectively.

32 Cotton to Congreve, 20 Dec. 1878, Positivist Papers, Add. MS. 45228.

33 Cotton, *New India or India in Transition* (London, 1885), pp.vii-viii.

34 Cotton, *England and India* (London, 1883) pp.7-10.



time Cotton believed the existing Raj to be fundamentally flawed and basically impermanent, since it rested ultimately on "the bayonet" and the "sufference of the people" rather than popular will.<sup>35</sup> Like Marx, in fact, Cotton saw British rule as partially regenerative, though in his case the rationale derived from the Positivist notion that Western civilization, freely absorbed, provided the model for the development of human society everywhere.

Cotton's specific criticisms of British rule, though less trenchant than Goddes's, covered the broad gamut of the financial and administrative system. The land revenue system, the main source of government income, he condemned for destroying traditional property rights in the soil, thereby subverting "the entire organisation of the village communities" and destroying the economic "fabric by which the agricultural classes were held together," replacing it with a "costly and mechanical centralisation."<sup>36</sup> Like the landed elite associated with the early Indian National Congress, Cotton favoured a permanent land revenue settlement such as Lord Cornwallis had established in late eighteenth century Bengal, believing that system would best attract "capital and intelligence" to agriculture.<sup>37</sup> This position, so alien to prevailing utilitarian philosophy, was in line with the traditional Positivist view that the "patrician aristocracy of indigenous growth" had a vital role to play in transforming and modernizing Indian society.<sup>38</sup> Again, in contrast to utilitarianism and in common with Geddes, Cotton argued that the the government was promoting railway and irrigation development in India at a faster rate than the country needed or could afford. Moreover, since the capital for these expensive developments came almost entirely from Britain, the resulting debt charges created a "serious drain" on Indian finances,<sup>39</sup> a criticism enunciated earlier and more comprehensively by the Indian financial expert and political leader, Dadabhai Naoroji. He was also more convinced than Naoroji and his Indian capitalist associates of the absolute virtues of *laissez-faire* economies, and evidently did not share their objections to the removal of import duties on cotton goods flooding into India from Lancashire. On the other hand, he agreed with them about the extent of India's poverty and

35 *Ibid.*, and *New India*, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

36 *New India*, *ibid.*, p. 54.

37 *Ibid.*, p. 55.

38 *Ibid.*, p. 9.

39 *Ibid.*, p. 61.



endorsed their opposition to taxation levels and their desire for retrenchment in expenditure.

For Cotton, or for Congreve and Geddes, the fundamental purpose of British rule was "to smooth ... India's transition from subjection to independence."<sup>40</sup> In addition to his theoretical objections to empire, Cotton considered the widening racial chasm between rulers and the rise of Indian nationalism as major factors making Indian emancipation inevitable. While he favoured neither a sudden or total British withdrawal, he insisted upon the need for a systematic devolution of power into Indian hands. In this connection Cotton attached top priority to Indianizing all branches of the civil service, not merely the judicial, to which a few Indians had already been appointed, but the executive as well. More radically still, he envisaged the transformation of the existing "mercenary" army of the Raj into "provincial national armies", officered by the Indian gentry, and "gradually replacing the present standing army of Great Britain."<sup>41</sup> As far as political reform was concerned, Cotton was most anxious to build upon the foundations of district and municipal self-government initiated by Ripon. Similarly, the legislative councils had to be changed from the existing consultative "farce" into "representative" institutions.<sup>42</sup> Instead of the current nomination system, Cotton advocated that up to two-thirds of the members of the councils should be elected. Correspondingly, the powers of the councils needed to be extended so that they could "exercise some check on the executive administration."<sup>43</sup> At the same time Cotton was no extreme democrat. In line with general Positivist thinking, he attached great importance to the socio-economic role of the Indian landed elite and believed the reformed legislature should include a significant infusion from this class. Cotton's ultimate vision was an India on a "fraternal footing" with the white colonies of the empire — that is a "federation" of self-governing states with continued British control over foreign affairs and ultimately protected by the military power of Britain.<sup>44</sup>

Cotton's economic critique of the Raj and his political and administrative reform ideas were rather similar to those which Hume and

40 Cotton, *England and India*, *op. cit.*, p.14.

41 Cotton, *New India*, *op. cit.*, pp. 118-21.

42 *Ibid.*, p. 83.

43 *Ibid.*, p. 86.

44 *Ibid.*, pp. 117-21.



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Wedderburn had arrived at from an advanced liberal philosophic base.<sup>45</sup> But his Positivist perspective gave Cotton a unique interest in and concern about India's "social and moral crisis" and "religious tendencies". He addressed these issues in the two final chapters of *New India*, which constituted an extensive amplification of Positivist views on relations between Western and Oriental civilization. In keeping with Comte, Cotton considered that Europe and India were at "an unequal stage of development" and that "the vanguard of Humanity is in the West."<sup>46</sup> It followed that the "regenerating doctrine" for India and the rest of the underdeveloped world must therefore come from the West, and correspond in its "main features" to the pattern of the vanguard civilization.<sup>47</sup> Currently, however, the West was in a "state of utter confusion" with "Nations, Churches, and classes . . . at war," and hence in no position to lead.<sup>48</sup> In that situation there was a danger of the "wholesale importation into India of European civilisation in its most material and anarchical form, without any moral safeguards."<sup>49</sup> Only after the vestiges of the repressive policy of the old Catholic *régime* in the West had disappeared, and the Positivist new world, based on "a stable and progressive public opinion" had emerged, would Europe be a trustworthy model for India and other countries.<sup>50</sup> Until that vital transition occurred, the British should therefore maintain the socio-cultural *status quo* in India.

Maintaining the *status quo* meant avoiding "collision" with Hinduism which formed the "basis of the moral order" and was "still vigorous," combining great "metaphysical subtlety and wide range of influence."<sup>51</sup> Much of the strength and stability of Hinduism derived from the caste system which Cotton, like Comte, singled out for special praise. Cotton maintained that the caste system "far from being the source of all the troubles . . . in Hindoo society, has rendered the most important services in the past, and still continues to sustain order and solidarity."<sup>52</sup> He therefore insisted that caste and Hinduism generally

45 W. Wedderburn, *Allan Octavian Hume* (London, 1913); and S. K. Ratcliffe, *Sir William Wedderburn* (London, 1923).

46 Cotton, *op. cit.*, *New India*, pp. 131-33.

47 *Ibid.*

48 *Ibid.*

49 *Ibid.*, pp. 133-34.

50 *Ibid.*

51 *Ibid.*, pp. 137-38.

52 *Ibid.*



were "too valuable to be rashly sacrificed before any Moloch of progress."<sup>53</sup> Forshadowing late twentieth century social-anthropological thinking, Cotton argued that Hinduism should not be destroyed but modified "to preserve its distinctive conceptions, and to gradually place them upon a social instead of a supernatural basis."<sup>54</sup> He went on to condemn Christian missionaries and British administrators for attempting to destroy the Hindu socio-religious system. Instead, Hinduism must be preserved and, in conjunction with "such sister institutions as the joint family and the village community," the "Hindoo nation" must be allowed to assume "the responsibility of working out its own social evolution."<sup>55</sup> Here Cotton was reiterating the Positivist view that the effective moral and social reform of any country must be fostered by internal support groups. His hope was that Positivism, which already had a number of committed adherents among Bengali intellectuals, would provide the regenerative spark for the gradual and evolutionary modification of Hinduism to meet the "changed conditions of modern life."<sup>56</sup> Eventually he envisaged that India, following the lead of a Positivist West, would "embrace the final universal and human religion which has its roots in man's moral nature."<sup>57</sup> Even when that distant millennium arrived, Cotton envisaged that India, like other countries would still be able to retain much of its distinctive identity and nationality.

Cotton's vigorous defence of Hindu socio-religious values, coupled with his criticisms of British economic policy and his advocacy of radical political reform, won him a prominent place in the affections of educated and politicized Indians. *New India* proved so popular among the educated classes that it was soon translated into the major Indian vernacular languages. The enthusiastic Indian response to the book was well summed up in a late 1885 editorial in N. N. Sen's influential Calcutta newspaper, *The Indian Mirror*. Sen asserted that Cotton's "truly sympathetic spirit," together with his "courageous" assertion to "hard and unpleasant" truths which Indians scarcely dared to express openly, had won him "the perfect confidence and affection of his native readers."<sup>58</sup> In fact, by a remarkable coincidence of timing it almost

53 *Ibid.*

54 *Ibid.*, p. 139.

55 *Ibid.*, p. 143.

56 *Ibid.*, p. 168.

57 *Ibid.*, p. 173.

58 *The Indian Mirror*, 22 Dec, 1885.



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seemed as if Cotton were calling a new India into being, for only a few months after his book was published the Indian National Congress held its inaugural session in Poona. When Congress held its second annual meeting in Calcutta in December 1886, Cotton attended as an observer and the assembly showed its regard by greeting him with a spontaneous outburst of "loud and deafening cheers."<sup>59</sup>

The enthusiasm of politicized India over Cotton's book was matched by the vehement hostility of the British community, whose collective ire had already been aroused by what they construed as Ripon's irresponsible encouragement of the Indian educated class.<sup>60</sup> As the *Indian Mirror* noted, the Anglo-Indian press, led by the influential *Pioneer* and *Englishman*, raised a "chorus of vituperation and radicule" against Cotton and *New India*.<sup>61</sup> Part of the strategy of the opposition was to discredit Cotton by a forthright attack upon Positivism. According to the *Indian Mirror*, a number of the leading Anglo-Indian newspapers were so enraged by Cotton's book that they castigated Positivism as a "mischievous system which should be plucked out root and branch, from India."<sup>62</sup> Though Cotton was not officially censured for publishing *New India*, it obviously did not endear him to his bureaucratic associates or superiors.

Cotton created diverse reactions in the British and Indian communities not merely as a result of his writing but because on occasion his Positivist ideas carried over into the world of practical administration. A prime and well publicized instance occurred during 1884-85 when Cotton, as a member of an inquiry commission on Calcutta sanitation, stood out in sharp opposition to the other British members in defence of the progress the municipal corporation was achieving in sanitary improvement, and more especially of the right of the elected Indian councillors, rather than British administrative officers, to set priorities in water and sewerage development.<sup>63</sup> Cotton correctly

<sup>59</sup> Indian National Congress [Report], 1886; printed in A.M. & S. Zaidi, (eds.), *The Encyclopaedia of the Indian National Congress*, Vol. I, 1885-90, (New Delhi, 1976), p. 114.

<sup>60</sup> S. Gopal, *The Viceroyalty of Lord Ripon 1880-1884* (London, 1953).

<sup>61</sup> *The Indian Mirror*, 22 Dec. 1885.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> Cotton, Minute of Dissent on the Calcutta Sanitation Commission Report, 26 Jan. 1885. My thanks are due to Dr. Chris Furedy, York University, Toronto for providing me with a copy of this document.



perceived the British-initiated criticisms of Calcutta sanitary conditions to be partly an attack on the institution of municipal self-government established only a decade earlier. So grateful were Calcutta's Bengali leaders for the way he had "vindicated the... corporation from the unscrupulous attacks of a hostile and influential *clique*" that when Cotton left for Britain on a six months' furlough in April 1885, a large gathering of prominent Indians assembled at Howrah Railway Station to give him a hearty send off.<sup>64</sup> He was garlanded in the traditional Indian fashion by Surendranath Banerjea, Bengal's most popular political leader. On that occasion, which preceded the publication of *New India*, the *Indian Mirror* commented upon Cotton's reputation for manfully upholding "right and justice" despite the "frowns of superior authority."<sup>65</sup>

Ultimately, however, it was Cotton's activities as the Positivist leader in India which got him into real hot water with the official establishment. After the death of Geddes in 1880 Cotton had been persuaded by Congreve to assume the leadership of the small group of Bengali Positivists.<sup>66</sup> Accordingly, Cotton had begun holding regular meetings to discuss Positivism and from 1 January 1881, he initiated formal annual celebrations of the Festival of Humanity. As interested in the socio-political creed of the movement as in its religious aspects, Cotton included in his Festival addresses candid comments upon current Indian political developments. His address of 1 January 1887 became the subject of critical comment in *The Saturday Review*, one of London's influential weekly periodicals. In an editorial entitled 'Positivism in India', the *Review* launched into Cotton for asserting the Positivist commitment to "Home Rule"; for characterizing the Indian and Irish questions as "inseparable"; and for comparing Hume's work on behalf of the Indian National Congress to Parnell's struggle for Irish emancipation.<sup>67</sup> It alleged that the entire address abounded in "the most dangerous... political incendiarism," and accused Cotton of advocating "in their extremest form, the revolutionary doctrines of the Young Bengal School." "Encouraging revolution" was a licence no civil servant should have and the *Review* wanted Cotton silenced. This press exposure caused great anxiety to Cotton and Congreve who decided the

64 *The Indian Echo*, 20 April, 1885; Cotton Collection, Microfilm Reel 1620.

65 *The Indian Mirror*, 17 April, 1885.

66 Forbes, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

67 *The Saturday Review*, Vol. 64, 9 July, 1887.



best tactic was to lie low and hope the matter would blow over.<sup>68</sup> However, the India Office was immediately alerted by the article and queried Lieutenant-Governor Bayley of Bengal about Cotton's loyalty.<sup>69</sup> Cotton categorically denied any disloyalty to government and pledged to avoid references to politics in future public or private utterances.<sup>70</sup> At the same time he handed over the leadership of the Indian Positivist Society to the Bengali intellectual, Jogendra C. Ghosh, though he remained an active member of the organization until he left Calcutta in 1896.<sup>71</sup> He also continued to write Congreve regularly until the Positivist leader died in 1899.

Cotton honoured his commitment not to speak out on political issues as long as he remained in the bureaucracy. On occasion, however, he discreetly attempted to encourage the government in a reformist direction. A prime example of this occurred in mid-1887 when he wrote a confidential memorandum to the Viceroy, Lord Dufferin, proposing that the small, appointed Legislative Council of Bengal be expanded to over 80 members, 40 of whom would be elected, and given extensive control over finances.<sup>72</sup> To senior officials this was a further example of Cotton's radicalism and it was over twenty years later before the Government introduced reforms along the lines Cotton had advocated.

Meanwhile, Cotton's desire for further career advancement<sup>73</sup> kept him from throwing over the bureaucratic traces. In fact, his Positivist belief in the traditional social structure occasionally got him into differences with Bengal political leaders who obtained seats on the enlarged Provincial Legislative Council after 1892. A case in point was his support in 1892 for a government bill weakening local municipal control over village *chaukidars* (watchmen) and turning them into a police arm of the provincial administration—a stand for which Cotton

68 Congreve to Cotton, 29 Sept., & 5 Oct. 1887, Congreve Papers, MS. Eng. lett. e 182.

69 Cotton to E. G. Colvin, 30 Aug. 1887, Dufferin Papers, F. 130/441.

70 Cotton to S. C. Bayley, 8 Sept. 1887, *ibid*,

71 Forbes, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

72 Cotton to Dufferin, with enclosure, 9 June 1887, Dufferin Papers, F.130/44f.

73 In 1893 Cotton informed Ripon of his desire for an influential position in the central government and asked Ripon to commend him to Elgin, the new Viceroy designate. (Cotton to Ripon, 8 Nov. 1893, Ripon Papers. Add. MS. 43618).



was duly criticized in the Bengal press.<sup>74</sup> On a broader issue of Congress policy he disapproved efforts to elect Indians to the British Parliament and thought they should concentrate instead on reforming the legislative councils in India.<sup>75</sup> Likewise, he was privately critical of the British Congress Committee's success in securing Commons approval in 1893 of a resolution favouring civil service examinations in India as well as Britain. Cotton feared such "spasmodic" reform would swamp the administration with "Bengalis and Parsis" and wanted instead "systematic progress" of Indianization on "sound principles."<sup>76</sup> This change of tone so impressed senior British officials that in 1892 the Lieutenant-Governor informed the Viceroy that Cotton had "sown his (politically speaking) wild oats and found out the hollowness of the Baboo" and therefore deserved promotion.<sup>77</sup> This explains Cotton's elevation to the central government secretariat in 1896 and his selection a few months later as Chief Commissioner of Assam. Cotton himself and some of his Indian friends, thought he deserved the lieutenant-governorship of Bengal, but the Conservative Secretary of State, Hamilton, still considered him "too unreliable" for such a responsible position.<sup>78</sup>

Cotton's early years in Assam were taken up with repairing the devastation caused by a massive earthquake which hit the province shortly after his appointment. But around 1900 a number of socio-economic issues concerning conditions on the English-owned tea plantations came to the fore. These proved a challenging testing ground for Cotton's Positivist and liberal principles. At the same time his Positivist background gave him the courage to stand up for his considered convictions. The first issue concerned wages and working conditions of the indentured Indian labourers on the tea plantations. The Bengal Government acting in close co-ordination with the Indian Government, headed by the energetic Lord Curzon, asked Cotton to inquire into the conditions, as a preparatory step to a much-needed revision of the Assam Labour and Emigration Act. Cotton was appalled by his findings. The condition of the coolie labourers was in fact little

<sup>74</sup> *Hindu Ranjika*, 1 June 1892, and *Banganivasi*, 15 Aug. 1892, *Bengal Native Newspaper Reports*, 11 June and 13 Aug. 1892, respectively.

<sup>75</sup> Cotton to Ripon, 9 Oct. 1888, Ripon Papers, Add. MS. 43618.

<sup>76</sup> Cotton to Ripon, 6 June 1893, *ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> Elliott to Lansdowne, 1 April 1893, Lansdowne Papers, D 558/24.

<sup>78</sup> Hamilton to Elgin. 11 March 1898, Hamilton Collection, C 125/3.



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better than those of forced labour camps of more recent times. Pernicious tactics were frequently used in recruiting the coolies, living and working conditions were often deplorable, and wages remained frozen at the rate of Rs. 5 per month for men and Rs. 4 for women that had been established by statute in 1865.<sup>79</sup> Cotton assembled statistics demonstrating that the wages on the plantations were significantly below wages for comparable work in the free market sector of the Assam economy. While he would have preferred the abandonment of the entire indentured labour system, Cotton realized there was no prospect of that. Senior government officials initially supported the case for increased wages and the first draft of the bill in 1899 provided for monthly rates of Rs. 6 and Rs. 5, respectively, in all new labour contracts. To this the tea interests vehemently objected and in select committee the government agreed to maintain the existing rates for the first year and to raise them by one-half rupee in each of the second and third years.<sup>80</sup> Cotton was the one member of the select committee who considered this compromise an unjustified sell out to the tea owners, a view obviously reinforced by the Positivist antipathy to capitalist exploitation. In his minute of dissent Cotton asserted that "one of the causes of the heavy mortality among Act coolies ... is that they do not always receive a living wage." The tea interests now perceived Cotton as their enemy and Calcutta's influential, pro-planter newspaper, *The Englishman*, described his minute as utterly reckless.<sup>81</sup>

The final showdown came in the India Legislative Council in March 1901, when the well-represented planter interests moved an amendment against any increase whatsoever in the wages of contract coolies. This would have been an unconscionable surrender to the industry and Curzon and his regular councillors opposed the amendment. But they did not side with Cotton who painted a graphic picture, supported by extensive statistical data, of the labour conditions of the voiceless "coolies" and criticized the select committee for watering down the original proposal for an immediate wage increase. Still Cotton derived some satisfaction from the defeat of the planter amendment by a vote of 13 to 5. Then the leading planter representative on the Council, J. Buckingham, followed with a second amendment to postpone the graduated wage increase for the next three years. This proposal, of

79 Cotton, *Indian Speeches and Addresses* (Calcutta, 1903), pp. 58-106; and *Indian and Home Memories* (London, 1911), pp. 258-69.

80 Indian Legislative Council, Abstract of Proceedings, 8 March 1901, pp. 46-49.

81 *The Englishman*, 23 February, 1901.



which ordinary councillors had not been given prior notice, dismayed Cotton. He acknowledged that the tea industry was in a somewhat depressed state due to overproduction, but argued that with dividends running at between 5 and 10 percent it was certainly not in crisis.<sup>82</sup> Cotton argued that this amendment "completely stultifies and destroys" the benefits assured to the coolies under the already watered down compromise of the select committee.<sup>83</sup> Accordingly, he appealed to Curzon and the government to reject this amendment as "decisively" as the former one. But the officials sided with Buckingham and Curzon publicly rebuked Cotton for using "language which exceeds the bounds of that which is reasonable or just."<sup>84</sup> One councillor, the Indian member P. Anada Charlu, spoke in support of Cotton. Charlu and two other Indian members, Sri Ram Bahadur and S. K. Bose, voted with Cotton against the amendment. Curzon, his officials, the tea-owners and one Indian, Sir Harmam Singh, united behind Buckingham's amendment which was sustained by a vote of 15 to 4. Cotton, as he later wrote, was "bitterly disgusted" at Curzon's "timid" sell out to the "capitalist party in Council."<sup>85</sup> Congress at its December 1901 session showed its support for Cotton's efforts by adopting a resolution, moved by the Positivist leader, J. C. Ghosh, and seconded by the young militant, B. C. Pal, regretting the postponement of the immediate enhancement of coolie wages in Assam, "although such a course was strongly insisted upon by the Chief Commissioner, and was imperatively demanded by the plainest considerations of justice."<sup>86</sup> Subsequent events vindicated Cotton, for it was found increasingly difficult to recruit labour at the depressed wage rates and in 1915 the Government at last moved to abandon the indentured system.<sup>87</sup>

The second and even more explosive issue occurred in 1901 and related to the light sentences imposed by the courts on Europeans convicted of assaulting their coolie labourers. Curzon was much concerned about this racist bias wherever it occurred in the judicial system and

82 For detailed statistical data supporting this contention about the dividend position see Cotton to Curzon, 2 Aug. 1901, Curzon Collection, F 111/204.

83 Indian Legislative Council, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

84 *Ibid.*, p. 154.

85 Cotton, *Indian and Home Memories*, *op. cit.*, p. 261.

86 *Indian National Congress [Report]*, 1901. A.M. & S. Zaidi (eds.), *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, 1901-05, (New Delhi, 1978), pp. 137-44 and 261.

87 *India*, 29 October, 1915.



encouraged Cotton to exert pressure in Assam for more evenhanded justice in cases involving planter conflicts with their workers. In one private letter Curzon assured Cotton that "if this reign of unjust and partial sentences is to continue—light measure for the white Manager, cruel measure for the coolie—the Government of India will most certainly intervene."<sup>88</sup> Positivism was strongly anti-racist and Cotton was immensely encouraged by Curzon's support. In his administrative report for 1900, Cotton highlighted recent judicial cases between planters and coolies, emphasizing the tendency for light or inadequate sentences against the employer in contrast to the severe punishment meted out to coolies.<sup>89</sup> Cotton warned that every effort would be made in future to ensure more equitable justice. Privately Cotton admitted that empirical evidence had convinced him "the system of tea-planting in Assam is thoroughly bad, and that the penal contract system is detestable."<sup>90</sup> Already hostile to Cotton over his strong line on raising coolie wages, the planter community was enraged by his candid exposure of their long established, privileged position before the Assamese courts and more especially at the prospect of stiffer sentences for abusing their employees. Cotton was accused of dishonesty, his motives were impugned and pro-planter newspapers, headed by the influential *Englishman* of Calcutta, demanded his dismissal from the service. The planter "attack" on Cotton was the worst of its kind in "forty years" according to S. N. Banerjea's influential newspaper, *The Bengalee*.<sup>91</sup> Confronted by this vicious planter outburst, Curzon, who had initially encouraged Cotton to take a strong stand for judicial equity, completely reversed himself. Responding publicly in early 1902 to the formal protests of the Tea Association, Curzon repudiated Cotton's criticisms of the judicial process in Assam.<sup>92</sup> In Curzon's confidential opinion Cotton showed "unmistakable bias" against the planters" and a complete "lack of discretion in his quarrel" with them.<sup>93</sup> This view was endorsed by Secretary of State, Hamilton, who characterized Cotton as "anti-European".<sup>94</sup> Finding himself "deliberately flung ... to the

88 Curzon to Cotton, 22 July 1901, Curzon Collection, F 111/204.

89 Cotton, *Indian and Home Memories*, op.cit., pp. 273-74.

90 Cotton to Curzon, 17 Sept. 1901, Curzon Collection, F 111/204.

91 *The Bengalee*, 13 September, 1901.

92 Cotton, *Indian and Home Memories*, op. cit., p.276.

93 Curzon to Hamilton, 11 Sept. and 21 Nov. 1901, Curzon Collection, F 111/160.

94 Hamilton to Curzon. 2 October 1901, Hamilton Collection, C 126/3.



wolves" as Cotton expressed it, he immediately tendered his resignation.<sup>95</sup> Cotton was due to retire later that year and to facilitate a quick return to the accustomed harmony between planters and the administration, Curzon pressured him to go home on leave for the duration of his service.<sup>96</sup>

Repudiated by the Viceroy, scorned by his service colleagues and derided by the planters, all because he had stood up for the oppressed coolies, Cotton was elevated to hero status among politicized Indians. His *New India* had established his reputation among them, but his defiance of the tea-planters won their hearts. The Indian press eulogized Cotton as a truly sympathetic and fairminded administrator.<sup>97</sup> The following tribute by *The Bengalee* was characteristic:

Insight, courage, enthusiasm, deep sympathy with the people, and readiness to sacrifice the brightest official prospects for them and their service — these are the qualities which have always distinguished Mr. Cotton, and now that he is about to retire, these are the qualities which from one end of the country to the other, have roused the enthusiastic gratitude of our people.<sup>98</sup>

*New India*, the newspaper edited by the young, militant, nationalist, Bepin Chandra Pal, acknowledged that no other provincial ruler had ever supported "so boldly and so openly the interests of labour against those of capital in this country."<sup>99</sup> Cotton's departure journey from Assam to Calcutta and thence by rail to Bombay became a triumphal procession as thousands of Indians greeted him enroute and held large public meetings in his honour. Cotton was enheartened by this unprecedented Indian support, as well as by the conviction that he had helped to achieve some tangible improvement in the "position of tea coolies" of Assam.<sup>100</sup> Partly to reduce the implied criticism of government in this public tribute to Cotton, Curzon arranged for a knighthood to be conferred upon Cotton shortly after his return to Britain.<sup>101</sup> This

95 Cotton, *Indian and Home Memories*, loc.cit.

96 Curzon to Hamilton, 21 November 1901, Curzon Collection, F111/160.

97 *Bengal Native Newspaper Reports*, 5 April and May 1902; and *Bombay Native Newspaper Reports*, 10 and 17 May 1902.

98 *The Bengalee*, 28 April 1902, *Bengal Native Newspaper Reports*, 10 May 1902.

99 *New India*, 17 February 1902, Cotton Collection, Microfilm Reel 1619.

100 Cotton to Curzon, 20 January, 1902, Curzon Collection, F 111/205.

101 Curzon to Hamilton, 21 November 1902, *Ibid.*, F 111/160.



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in turn led Cotton to underestimate the real depth of Curzon's distrust of him. For the first few months after his departure Cotton still thought it "possible — though most improbable" — that he would be offered the lieutenant-governorship of Bengal.<sup>102</sup> Nothing, however, could have been further from the minds of Curzon or Hamilton.

When Cotton realized that his desire for the coveted plum of the Bengal lieutenant-governorship would not be fulfilled, he turned his attention to a political career in Britain. Fourteen years earlier he had expressed the view that the "struggle and turmoil" of public life in Britain would be "far more suited" to his "character than officialism in India."<sup>103</sup> In 1902, at the age of 57, he had some doubts, engendered partly by Curzon's warning to him that retired I.C.S. officers "are always failures in the House of Commons."<sup>104</sup> Cotton consulted his Liberal mentor, Ripon, on the issue. When Ripon confided that he thought Cotton had sufficient "political knowledge and interest in general ... questions, to have "a fair chance" of being a success in Parliament,<sup>105</sup> Cotton decided to take the plunge. In early 1903 he gained the endorsement of the Liberal Party in Nottingham East as its candidate in the next parliamentary elections. The transition from the autocratic Raj to the enlivening world of British liberal politics coincided with the obvious decline of Positivism following the death of Congreve in 1899. Though he remained a Positivist, advanced liberalism increasingly became the dominant creed in Cotton's life.

During 1904 Cotton's constituency work was overshadowed by his involvement in Indian affairs. At that time the British Committee of the Indian National Congress, headed by the aging William Wedderburn was in a somewhat moribund state. Cotton joined the organization and, with the zeal and courage of a Positivist crusader, mounted a spirited and well-directed attack on Curzon's military expedition into Tibet in 1903. Using the Committee's weekly publication *India*, the letter columns of *The Times*, and the London *Daily News*, Cotton condemned this latest instance of British-Indian expansionism. At the very outset he described the expedition as an "abominable" and "stupid"

102 Cotton to Ripon, 1 July 1902, Ripon Papers, Add. MS. 43618.

103 Cotton to Ripon, 3 April, 1888, *ibid.*

104 This was Ripon's paraphrase of what Cotton had told him. Ripon to Cotton, 22 July 1902, Cotton Collection, Microfilm Reel 1619.

105 *Ibid.*



move, an "outrage ... against an unarmed civilized people."<sup>106</sup> Discounting either real trade potential for Britain or Russian designs on the region, Cotton suspected that the basic motives were the glory of entering the forbidden city of Lhasa, and more especially the seizure of the strategic Chumbi Valley adjacent to northern Assam. Among other things Cotton criticized the expedition for its divisive tactic of bypassing the Chinese authorities and dealing directly with the Tibetans. In addition to his vigorous press campaign, which received due publicity in newspapers in India, Cotton did extensive public speaking against the Tibetan expedition. At the most important of these protest meetings, held in Westminster in January 1904 and sponsored by the New Reform Club, the British Committee of Congress and the London Indian Society, Cotton shared the platform with radical journalist, J. A. Hobson, and Congress leader, W. C. Bannerjee.<sup>107</sup> Cotton and his liberal radical associates were correct in suspecting Curzon of imperialist designs on Tibet, but unknown to them the Cabinet was from the outset opposed to making Tibet an outpost of the empire.<sup>108</sup> When the expedition encountered Tibetan resistance in early 1904 and became involved in a massacre of largely unarmed Tibetans, public opinion in Britain turned decisively against the expedition. While the British Government permitted the expedition to go all the way to Lhasa, it vetoed the proposals of Curzon and Francis Younghusband, the aggressive expedition leader, to turn Tibet into a British protectorate. As the best informed, consistent and most outspoken critic of Curzon's Tibetan policy, Cotton had helped to influence that outcome by alerting public opinion against permanent entanglement in such a difficult and inhospitable frontier zone. His vigorous attacks infuriated Curzon, who confidentially described them as "the meanest and most malignant" form of criticism.<sup>109</sup> Curzon mistakenly attributed it to Cotton's career disappointment whereas it really derived from his genuine commitment to the Positivist principle of anti-imperialism.

Cotton's high publicity profile over the Tibet issue undoubtedly influenced the Indian National Congress to honour him with the Presidency of its twentieth anniversary session scheduled for Bombay in late 1904. Other factors in the choice included his long term support for

<sup>106</sup> *Daily News*, 3 December, 1903; and *India*, 4 December 1903.

<sup>107</sup> *Daily News*, 27 January, 1904, Cotton Collection, Microfilm Reel 1619.

<sup>108</sup> Hamilton to Curzon, 20 February and 28 May 1903, Hamilton Collection CI26/5.

<sup>109</sup> Curzon to Brodrick, 5 April, 1904, Curzon Collection, Microfilm F111/163.



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the Congress, his role in Assam, and his post-retirement involvement in the British Committee. Cotton was accompanied to India by Wedderburn and they were received there like national heroes. Thousands of Indians welcomed them to Bombay and the audience of some 12,000 attended Cotton's presidential address. In his speech Cotton identified himself completely with the Congress cause, advocated substantial reform of Indian administration, greater indigenous control of the economy and urged greater Congress efforts to forge India's diverse communities into a united nation. He spoke with particular passion of the "wanton... aggression" against Tibet and the cruel injustice of saddling the "poverty-stricken people of India" with the cost of the expedition.<sup>110</sup> The Congress followed through with a formal resolution expressing similar sentiments. After the session Cotton travelled to Calcutta where he spoke at a massive public meeting in the Town Hall against the recently announced Government proposal to partition the Bengali heartland along Hindu-Muslim lines. One especially enthusiastic Calcutta newspaper described his speech as "wise, thoughtful and inspiring... , an address which might have fallen from the lips of Sri Krishna to raise the drooping spirits of the Pandavas in their cheerless exile."<sup>111</sup> Cotton agreed with officials that the vast province of Bengal was administratively unwieldy, but his solution was to detach the populous, Hindi-speaking Bihar region and retain the unity of the Bengali cultural area. This solution, characterized aptly by a contemporary pamphlet as based on "unanswerable arguments," would have been much more in accord with Bengal public opinion.<sup>112</sup> Another part of Cotton's mission to Calcutta was to pressure Curzon into formally receiving the Congress resolutions, but this the imperious Viceroy refused to do. Rebuffed, Cotton went on to Assam where he was ignored by the Europeans but enthusiastically received by the Indian population.<sup>113</sup>

Upon his return to Britain Cotton continued to oppose Curzon's partition of Bengal and to concentrate upon building up his political support in Nottingham. Balfour's Conservative Government resigned in December 1905 and the general election was held in early 1906.

110 Indian National Congress (Report), 1904; printed in A. M. and S. Zaidi (eds.), *op.cit.*, Vol. IV, 1901-1905, (New Delhi, 1978), pp. 607-29.

111 *Indian Mirror*, 13 Jan. 1905. Bengal Native Newspaper Reports, 21 Jan. 1905.

112 [Anonymous], *The Partition of Bengal, An Open Letter to Lord Curzon*, (Calcutta, 1904), p. 1.

113 *Praja Bandhu*, 22 Jan. 1905, Bombay Native Newspaper Reports, 28 January 1905.



Cotton campaigned on an advanced Radical and pro-Labour platform, including a commitment to "self-government and popular control" as well as the promotion of India's "claims . . . upon the House of Commons."<sup>114</sup> His Conservative opponent had held East Nottingham since 1895, but even his attacks on Cotton's record in India failed to pay off.<sup>115</sup> Cotton received 6,020 votes, a majority of 1,730 over his Conservative rival, and that contributed to the Liberal electoral triumph of 1906.

Cotton proved to be a conscientious M. P., interested in the major issues of the day, and, indeed, Ripon had advised him that success in the Commons depended on being a good generalist. Although Ripon had also explicitly cautioned against assuming that one could "do much in regard to Indian matters,"<sup>116</sup> Cotton inevitably became identified primarily with India. After all, India was the area he knew best. With mounting Indian political 'unrest' and demands for reform, India was closer to parliamentary centre stage than usual during the next four years.

In the Commons Cotton became the informal leader of a small but increasingly vigorous group of pro-India Radical and Labour members, which included V. H. Rutherford, T. Hart-Davies, C. J. O'Donnell, F. Mackarness, J. Keir Hardie and James O'Grady. On many Indian issues they could count on substantial support from among the more than 190 Liberal and Labour members who gave nominal allegiance to the Indian Parliamentary Committee, revived on Wedderburn's initiative in February 1906.<sup>117</sup> Cotton hoped for redress of Indian grievances by the new Liberal Government, which included the philosophic radical, John Morley, as Secretary of State for India. But Cotton also wanted to make a name for himself in the Commons and with Bengal in a politically disturbed state as a result of Curzon's policies, favoured making an immediate forthright stand in the House for change in India. Accordingly, on the opening of the new Parliament in early 1906 the pro-India Radicals introduced an amendment to the Address calling attention to the "wide-spread dissatisfaction and unrest" created in India

114 Cotton, Election Address, 1906, Cotton Collection, Microfilm Reel 1619.

115 Cotton, *Indian and Home Memories*, *op. cit.*, p. 292.

116 Ripon to Cotton, 22 July 1902, Cotton Collection, Microfilm Reel 1619, 117 *India*, 2 March 1906. Formed originally on Wedderburn's initiative in 1893, the Committee lapsed after 1900. For comparative data on the Committee of 1893 and 1906, including party support, see Morrow, *op. cit.*, p. 283.



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by the Government's policies, requesting the modification of the Bengal partition, and urging favourable ministerial consideration to "the responsible demands of the Indian people for a larger share in the administration of their affairs."<sup>118</sup> Cotton seconded the amendment in a forceful but long-winded speech on the misguided policy of partition and the need to chart a new liberal course in India. Morley hinted at future political reform but was still feeling very unsure of himself in the complex world of Indian affairs. He admitted that the partition went against the popular wishes of most Bengalis, but influenced by the India Office bureaucracy came down solidly in favour of administrative continuity and declared partition to be "a settled fact".<sup>119</sup> Cotton was appalled by Morley's rigidity as was Indian National Congress opinion in Bengal and throughout the subcontinent. On this issue Cotton and Radical leadership core of the Indian Parliamentary Committee accurately represented the Congress viewpoint and perceptively appraised the unfortunate political consequences of the non-modification of partition.

In the newly-created, Muslim-majority province of East Bengal and Assam Lieutenant-Governor Fuller fanned the flames of Congress agitation by openly acknowledging his partiality for Muslims, harshly cracking down on student dissidents and forcibly dispersing the conference of the Bengal Provincial Congress in April 1906. Cotton and his Radical associates cited Fuller's behaviour as proof of the 'divide and rule' tactics that lay at the heart of partition, and demanded his resignation. Morley responded by pressuring Fuller into resigning. But Morley became incensed when he learned through confidential channels that Cotton and C. J. O'Donnell, fellow Radical and former I.C.S. dissident, had been encouraging Bengal Congress leaders to keep up political agitation in anticipation that Morley would have to yield eventually on partition.<sup>120</sup> An intensely vain man, Morley unwisely dug in his heels against any modification of partition. In the Commons, and more especially in his private correspondence of this period, Morley revealed an intense and altogether unjustified scorn for Cotton and the Radical, pro-India lobby. Among the extreme epithets which he used to describe Cotton and his faction were "donkey," "dunder-headed" "simpletons," and "fossils" of the "vaunted Indian Bureaucracy".<sup>121</sup> The Viceroy, Minto,

<sup>118</sup> *Hansard*, 152 (1906), pp. 830-44.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, p.844.

<sup>120</sup> Stanley A. Wolpert, *Morley and India, 1906-1910* (Berkeley, 1967), pp. 102-4.

<sup>121</sup> Morley to Minto, 18 May and 22 June 1906, 27 Dec. 1907, and 23 April 1908, Morley Collection, D573/1-3.



similarly complained about the "inane enquiries of Cotton and Co.,"<sup>122</sup> while the imperious Under-secretary at the India Office, Arthur Godley, dismissed Cotton as a "bore" after hearing his first speech in the Commons.<sup>123</sup> Clearly, Cotton and the pro-India activists were real thorns of the flesh of the governing authorities. More important they helped to restrain the autocracy of the Raj.

For Cotton the experience with Morley and the Liberal Ministry was both disillusioning and radicalizing. Convinced himself that liberal principles were universally applicable, Cotton had little patience with a Government which betrayed its creed where India was concerned and found himself in the familiar position of being a critic of the establishment. In fact, as Margot D. Morrow has demonstrated in her recent London Ph.D., thesis on the British Committee of Congress, during these years Cotton was frequently at odds with his British and Indian colleagues of that organization who generally favoured a more diplomatic approach towards Morley and the Liberal Government.<sup>124</sup> It was more a question of differences over tactics than policy, for excepting his stronger sympathy for Indian economic nationalism Cotton was no more radical than British Congress Committee stalwarts, Hume and Wedderburn. In some areas such as social reform he was more conservative. But Cotton was too fond of the limelight to relish behind-the-scenes diplomacy and, put off by Morley in his first request for a private meeting,<sup>125</sup> he committed himself to a vigorous public profile. A year earlier he had taken a similar position regarding the Congress journal, *India*, which, he argued, lacked "both vitality and interest" and badly needed "the infusion of new blood and more-up-to-date ideas."<sup>126</sup> Cotton secured the changes he wanted by orchestrating his son Evan, a successful Calcutta barrister and part-time journalist, into the editorship, an altogether uncharacteristic case of nepotism on his part. While that did not go down well with some Congress leaders in India and Britain,<sup>127</sup> it meant that during his years in the Commons Cotton had the support

<sup>122</sup> Minto to Morley, 13 Dec. 1909, *ibid.*, D573/18.

<sup>123</sup> Godley to Minto, 27 Feb. 1906, Minto Papers, MS.12729, (National Library of Scotland).

<sup>124</sup> Morrow, *op.cit.*, pp. 304-34.

<sup>125</sup> Morley to Cotton, 2 Feb. 1906, Cotton Collection, Microfilm Reel 1619.

<sup>126</sup> Cotton to Wedderburn, 5 and 7 March, 1905, Gokhale Papers, 579/21, (National Archives of India).

<sup>127</sup> Morrow, *op.cit.*, pp. 70-71.



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of the editor of *India* on both policy and tactics. Though not outspoken enough to satisfy militant nationalists in the subcontinent, *India* was strongly critical of Morley and the Liberals. In fact, by 1911, Gokhale and the 'moderate' Congress leadership in India pressured the Cottons to tone down the journal's attacks on British administration.<sup>128</sup>

Cotton and the pro-Indian lobby, having failed in their commendable objective of modifying Bengal partition, were soon presented with an even greater cause, that of resisting the increasing infringements upon civil liberties in India. From 1906 urban India became a hotbed of political agitation as disillusionment set in over the failure of the Liberals to reverse Curzon's objectionable policies or initiate new reforms. The politics of boycott and Swadeshi were born and in 1907 Congress split into militant and collaborationist factions. The response of the Indian Government to the new wave of political activism was increasing repression including such measures as rigid controls over the press and public assembly; suspension of the right of habeas corpus and other curtailments of established judicial process; and resort to a long-unused, despotic regulation of 1818 permitting deportation of individuals at the whim of government. Morley invariably backed up Minto on these autocratic measures though sometimes with private reservations.<sup>129</sup> When the 1818 regulation was used in early 1907 to deport the prominent Punjab political leader, Lajpat Rai, and his associate, Ajit Singh, Cotton and Mackarness led in barraging Morley with questions. Cotton, who knew Lajpat personally, believed that it was a "gross outrage" against the basic principles of liberalism to "arrest deport and detain indefinitely" 'for reasons of state' persons against whom there was insufficient evidence for normal judicial proceedings.<sup>130</sup> In a telling letter to *The Times* Cotton reminded Morley of the time in 1902 when he had himself denounced in the Commons a similar arbitrary detention by the South African government. Cotton rightly bridled Morley and the Liberal Ministry for now defending a course of action "they so unreservedly condemned in opposition."<sup>131</sup> Morley was unable to answer his critics effectively, and, in August 1907, warned Minto that it would be "impossible" for him to "face" another session of the Commons "if the two men are still under lock and key."<sup>132</sup> Minto complied and in

128 Wedderburn to H. Cotton, 9 Jan. 1911, Gokhale Papers, 574/IV/145.

129 Wolpert, *op.cit.*, 106-28.

130 Cotton, *Indian and Home Memories*, *op. cit.*, p. 319.

131 Cotton to the Editor, 15 June 1907, *The Times*, 18 June 1907.

132 Morley to Minto, 23 August 1907, Gokhale Papers, D573/2.



November, after six months' imprisonment, Lajpat and Ajit Singh were unconditionally released. Cotton deserved much credit for this, a fact which Lajpat thankfully acknowledged.<sup>133</sup>

Cotton's response to violence when it erupted in India in 1908 was not only to deplore it but also view it as a not unexpected response to insensitive despotism. "Is there any country in the world," he queried, "where similar antecedents would not have led to similar consequences?"<sup>134</sup> Nor did the violence lead him to tone down his criticism of government repression; quite the reverse. He continued to attack the harsh punishment of political agitators; argued that the hostile tone which characterized some of the Indian papers was provoked by the ravings of the British-Indian press; and described the prosecution of the popular, Maharashtrian editor and political leader, Tilak, as 'suicidal'.<sup>135</sup> Cotton and the pro-Indian lobby were particularly outraged over the arbitrary arrest and deportation in late 1908 of nine Bengali political leaders, including the much respected Aswini K. Dutt, a prominent East Bengal educator, and K. K. Mitra, editor of the *Sanjivani* newspaper. Since the Indian Parliamentary Committee was divided on this highly sensitive issue, Mackarness, Cotton, Ramsay Macdonald and a dozen other Commons activists promptly formed an Indian Civil Rights Committee to concert pressure against this wanton despotism of the Raj.<sup>136</sup> With support from a number of prominent radical journalists such as J. A. Hobson and H. W. Nevinson, the Committee mounted a highly effective campaign in Parliament and the press. Cotton in his last major Commons speech in August 1909 vehemently denounced the deportations.<sup>137</sup> He argued that they were men of "high character and repute" whose only "real offence" was in leading the "movement in favour of encouraging the manufacture and consumption of country-made goods and the discouragement of foreign importations." But in Cotton's view Swadeshi and boycott were no more than "an exaggerated form" of Tariff Reform in Britain. "What is regarded as a patriotic movement in England", he charged, "is sedition in India." Besides Parliamentary speeches and repeated questions about the deportations, one of the effective actions of the Indian Civil Rights Committee was to

133 Lajpat Rai to Gokhale, 3 Nov. 1907, Gokhale Papers, 269/22.

134 Cotton, *Indian and Home Memories*, *op. cit.*, p. 324.

135 *Hansard*, 193 (1908), pp. 208-12.

136 *Morrow*, *op. cit.*, pp. 329-34.

137 *Hansard*, 8 (1909), pp. 2069-75.



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organize a formal letter to Prime Minister Asquith, signed by 146 M.P.s, urging that the "detainees be either brought to trial or set at liberty."<sup>138</sup> Eventually this sustained assault on the Government had an effect and, just before the new Parliament met in 1910, Morley instructed the Indian authorities to release all of the Bengal deportees.<sup>139</sup> Though Cotton and his supporters failed to persuade the Government to revoke any of the repressive legislation passed in India during these years, their defence of Indian civil liberties was persistent and commendable. Their role, coming at a time when political dissent was so heavily under fire in India, was much appreciated by Indian public opinion. At a more personal level, at least two of the deportees, K. K. Mitra and S.P. Bose, conveyed privately to Cotton profound appreciation for his help in securing their release.<sup>140</sup>

The final major Indian issue to come before Parliament in these years was that of constitutional reform. Here, too, Cotton and his associates were less than enthusiastic about the proposals developed by Morley and Conservative Minto. Cotton considered that the Indian Government's first draft of the proposals, published in August 1908, did not contain even the "germ of any useful reform," a view that put him at odds with Wedderburn and other British Congress Committee members.<sup>141</sup> Cotton was more satisfied with the final reform package as presented to Parliament by Morley, providing as it did for the appointment of Indians to the Executive Councils and for direct elections to Legislative Councils, whose size and functions were increased. His remaining major objection to the Bill was that it provided separate electorates and inflated representation for Muslims features which had their origins in commitments that Minto had gladly accorded to Muslim political leaders and to which Morley then acceded. Cotton was convinced that the demand for these special concessions had come only from a limited and privileged section of the Muslim population; that the authorities in India were encouraging them as a divide and rule tactic; and that Morley had made a serious mistake in supporting constitutional partiality towards Indian Muslims. His initial

138 Mackarness to Asquith, 3 May 1909, quoted in Morrow, *op. cit.*, p. 331.

139 John Morley, *Recollections*, Vol. II (London, 1917), p. 319.

140 Bose to Cotton, 13 March 1910, and S. Mitra (Son of K. K. Mitra) to [H.E.A.] Cotton, 11 Feb. 1916, Cotton Collection, Microfilm Reel 1619.

141 Cotton to Wedderburn, 11 Dec. 1907, Gokhale Papers 579/77.



reaction was that the concessions, if implemented to their full limits, would deal a "fatal blow to Indian national unity."<sup>142</sup> But Cotton's legitimate and all too prophetic concerns on these points were mollified by Government assurances during the Parliamentary debates that the communal provisions would not be pressed to extreme limits.<sup>143</sup> Though he still regretted the concessions, Cotton voted in favour of the Act. He characterized it as an "olive branch" to politicized India, but cautioned that further progress towards fuller representative government would be needed.<sup>144</sup> In the meantime he hoped the legislation would curtail the autocratic exercise of power by British bureaucrats and foster governance along "more democratic lines."<sup>145</sup> Finally Cotton warned that the positive political effects of the reforms would be jeopardized unless the government relaxed its policies of coercion and repression and released the Bengali deportees.

A few months after the Indian reforms were enacted, a general election was called in Britain. Cotton missed most of the campaign because of illness. This, coupled with his having represented India more vigorously than his constituency, lost him his Nottingham seat, though only by a margin of 152 votes.<sup>146</sup> The pro-Congress Indian press, which had given considerable attention to Cotton's promotion of Indian interests in Parliament, much regretted his defeat. The *Bengalee*, for example, described his defeat as a "great loss" to India which "never had a stauncher or more devoted friend in the . . . Commons than Sir Henry."<sup>147</sup> In the British-Indian press, running true to form where Cotton was concerned, there was rejoicing. Morley too was delighted to be relieved from the probing of one of his best-informed and most relentless critics.<sup>148</sup> Electoral defeat marked the end of Cotton's public career and his remaining years were troubled by failing health and financial difficulties associated with an insurance company of which he had become chairman.<sup>149</sup>

142 Cotton to Hume, 12 Feb. 1909, Gokhale Papers, 125.

143 *Hansard*, 3 (1909), pp. 559-65.

144 *Ibid.*, 4 (1909) pp. 96-97.

145 *Ibid.*, 3 (1909), p. 565.

146 Cotton, *Indian and Home Memories*, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

147 Editorial, 21 Jan. 1910, Bengal Native Newspaper Reports, 29 Jan. 1910.

148 Morley to Minto, 18 Nov. 1909, Morley Papers, D573/4.

149 *India*, 29 October, 1915.



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Despite these difficult circumstances Cotton wrote his autobiography in these declining years and did considerable journalistic writing and some public speaking. On one occasion particularly he demonstrated his continuing capacity to ruffle the British Indian establishment. Though totally opposed to either revolutionary or terrorist activity, Cotton had some sympathy for militant, non-violent nationalists and in 1911 was the main guest at a New Year's reception in London, hosted by the Bengali militant, Bepin Chandra Pal. At the gathering Cotton lauded the ideal of self-government for India, decried the repressive policies of the Raj and made some passing references to the Maharashtrian revolutionary, V. D. Savarkar, whose picture was on the wall.<sup>150</sup> While being deported to India to stand trial on conspiracy charges, Savarkar had escaped British police custody in Marseilles and his case for political asylum in France was then being heard by the Hague Tribunal. Cotton actually cited the Savarkar case to reinforce his advice against resort to violence, but he referred to him as "their unfortunate friend" and expressed the strong hope that the Tribunal would grant him asylum in France. When reports of Cotton's open association with B.C. Pal and his remarks about Savarkar, reported in a London newspaper, were communicated via the wire service to India, they created a storm of protest in the British-Indian community, and corresponding praise from many Indian newspapers.<sup>151</sup> The Liberal Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, was "disgusted" by Cotton's behaviour, thought that Congress should "disown" such extreme language, and, in fact, pressured Wedderburn, who was then in India to preside over the Congress, to keep Cotton in line.<sup>152</sup> Actually, Cotton was little more extreme than Wedderburn, only more outspoken. Despite a bitter attack on his remarks in the letter columns of *The Times*,<sup>153</sup> Cotton firmly reasserted his hope that the Tribunal would "restore Savarkar to France and vindicate the right of international asylum."<sup>154</sup>

Cotton's radicalizing process, conditioned by his disillusionment over the shortcomings of the Liberal Ministry in its handling of Indian

<sup>150</sup> *Daily Chronicle*, 2 Jan. 1909; reprinted in *The Times*, 7 Jan. 1911.

<sup>151</sup> See, for example, Tilak's *Marhatta*, Jan. 1911, Bombay Native Newspaper Reports, 14, Jan. 1911.

<sup>152</sup> Hardinge to Crewe, 4 Jan. 1911, Hardinge Papers 117, (Cambridge University Library).

<sup>153</sup> *Justitia* to the Editor, 3 and 5 Jan. 1911, *The Times*, 4 and 6 Jan. 1911, respectively.

<sup>154</sup> Cotton to the Editor, 6 Jan. 1911, *The Times*, 7 Jan. 1911.



affairs, was illustrated by his attitude towards the Public Service Commission of 1912. Appointed to review the operations of the Indian Civil Service, including the Indianization issue, the Commission contained two members in whom Cotton had much confidence, namely Ramsay Macdonald and the capable Congress leader, G.K. Gokhale. Still Cotton expected "little of real value" would come from the Commission.<sup>155</sup> Indeed, he confided that he believed its real objective was "to bolster up obsolete and decaying methods of administration."<sup>156</sup> By this Cotton meant, as he stated in an article in the Congress journal, *India*, in 1914, that the Service dominated by foreigners and autocratic in organization, was trying to "rivet it [self] for all time as the basis of Indian administration."<sup>157</sup> Such an unreconstructed Service, Cotton warned, was inapplicable to India's political "environment of popular representation and...growing sense of nationality, and...obviously inconsistent with...the realisation of self-government."<sup>158</sup> While Cotton did not specify precisely how much Indianization he desired or how rapid the process should be, he clearly accepted the logic that the process of Indianization must go hand-in-hand with the transition towards domestic self-government.

A similar radicalization was evident in Cotton's interpretation of and responses to India's economic problems. A comparison between his views on these issues in the 1885 publication of *New India* and the revised edition of 1904 is striking. In the former, as noted above, his criticisms centred upon temporary land revenue settlements, the failure to respect traditional property rights, and over-expenditure on public works with the resulting debt-service 'drain' to Britain. In the 1904 edition the former brief chapter on "Non-interference and Economy" was replaced by separate chapters on "Indian Land Problems" and "India's Economic Problems." There was little change in his views on land issues, except for a new concern about the "improvement of agriculture," which, like some late twentieth century experts, he thought could not be achieved by expensive scientific schemes of the West, but by encouraging Indian agriculturalists to build upon their existing experience and technology.<sup>159</sup> On the other hand, Cotton's analysis of India's economic problems now coincided closely with those of Indian

155 Cotton to Wedderburn, 28 October 1914, Gokhale Papers, 125.

156 *Ibid.*

157 *India*, 17 July, 1914.

158 *India*, 10 July, 1914.

159 Cotton, *New India*, revised ed., (London, 1904), pp. 84-87.



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economic nationalists such as Dadabhai Naoroji and R. C. Dutt, both of whom he was on close terms with after 1902. In the 1880s Cotton had acknowledged India's poverty, but he now argued that poverty was increasing rather than decreasing. As evidence of this he cited the greater frequency and severity of famines with their "terrible mortality."<sup>160</sup> While acknowledging that there were many causes for this "increasing poverty," like many Indian economic nationalists Cotton contended that the prime reason was the destruction of Indian handicraft industries and their "substitution" by British manufactured products.<sup>161</sup> Moreover, most new industry such as railways, jute mills and mines were "in alien hands: the capital is British and the profits do not remain in India."<sup>162</sup> Even in 1885 he had criticized this 'drain' of wealth. But he now viewed all government transfer payments to Britain, which he estimated at £30 million annually, as an inevitable depressant on Indian economic development. On other important economic issues Cotton also showed he understood Indian nationalist feelings even if he did not invariably endorse them. He warned, for example, that no "Indian patriot" was ever likely to be reconciled to the continuing spectacle of "an India supplying England with its raw products and in its turn dependent upon England for all its more important manufactures."<sup>163</sup> True to the logic of his overall analysis, Cotton was sympathetic towards India's emerging capitalist entrepreneurs, even though he realized that their success would inevitably result in some displacement of British industry. The one important area, in fact, where he parted company with Indian economic nationalists was in his opposition to protective policies to foster India's economic development. For him, like other pro-India radicals, free trade remained a sacred cow.

Cotton's attitude towards the crucial issues of political reform also became more progressive in his later years, shaped by his experience in the Commons. He either abandoned or at any rate ceased to advocate an important role for the Indian aristocracy in a reformed system of government. In his last statements on Indian politics published in *India*

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 96-98.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.



in 1914 and 1915, there is no reference to this theme. Instead, he criticized the Morley-Minto reforms for not broadening the franchise and complained about the lack of power of unofficial members of the councils.<sup>164</sup> He continued to favour the development of extensive provincial autonomy and welcomed the growth which he detected in "provincial nationalism." What he envisaged, and what he believed the majority of the Congress wanted, was an Indian federation self-governing in its domestic affairs based on the model of "Australia and . . . the Canadian Dominion," and, like them, allied to Britain through the Crown.<sup>165</sup> In this connection Cotton was delighted by the rapprochement then developing between Congress and the Muslim League, regarding such unity as crucial for the successful growth of self-government. For the same reason he was pleased that the Liberal Government, albeit belatedly, finally revoked the disastrous partition of Bengal in 1911.<sup>166</sup> He also welcomed the amnesty granted to many political prisoners by Lord Hardinge's administration, but continued to press for a retreat from repressive legislation and in particular for modifications of the highly restrictive Press Act of 1910.<sup>167</sup>

Assessing Cotton's influence on the development of early Indian nationalism is no easy task. Clearly his role was more complex than has hitherto been assumed. As a firm believer in constitutionalism and order, Cotton was strongly opposed to revolutionary violence which became one facet of the nationalist spectrum after 1907. On the other hand, his high regard for Hindu socio-cultural values and his dislike for British, government-initiated, social reform gave him a certain affinity with the increasingly influential, militant Hindu politicians of Lajpat Rai-Tilak-B. C. Pal school. In other respects, such as his support for constitutionalism and for the maintenance of an Indian association with Britain at least in the area of foreign affairs, he belonged to the first generation of Congressmen, represented by 'Moderate' leaders such as Banerjea, Gokhale and Naoroji. Yet, in other important ways, he was more politically advanced and outspoken than the Congress establishment of the time. From his I.C.S. retirement in 1902 till his death in 1915 few Congress supporters in India or Britain fought more consistently or courageously than Cotton to expose

164 *India*, 17 July, 1914.

165 Cotton, *New India*, revised ed., *op.cit.*, pp. 192-193.

166 *India*, 15 December, 1911.

167 Crewe to Hardinge, 6 March, 1914, Hardinge Papers, 120.



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the repression and inequities of the Raj or to promote reform. Nobody of his generation stood up more firmly on behalf of the oppressed Indian labourers on the tea plantations. Here Cotton gave a lead to Congress, which it did not follow up effectively. In the early days of Congress, when its future was by no means assured, Cotton had given encouragement to the Indian educated class by his writing of *New India*. By the early twentieth century his economic views about India were in advance of most of his British Congress Committee associates and almost totally in tune with politicized Indian opinion. Cotton was in fact, a man who took his Positivist and advanced liberal principles seriously and demonstrated the courage of his convictions through most of his active life.

While Cotton's radicalism and outspokenness kept him from the prized lieutenant-governorship of Bengal, his contributions towards the liberalization of the Raj and the development of Indian nationalism were significant. Though modern historical writing on India has largely overlooked Cotton's role, it is reassuring to note that some of his closest British and Indian contemporaries valued his contributions. Among the private letters to Evan Cotton following his father's death in 1915, two demonstrate this point best. Ramsay Macdonald, with whom Cotton had been closely associated after 1906, wrote: "India is receiving blow upon blow in the loss of some of her most conspicuous champions amongst whom none were more distinguished, more unpurchasable than your father."<sup>168</sup> The second was from Lajpat Rai, then in exile in Tokyo, who wrote: "we...feel that by his death we have lost one of our greatest benefactors, kindest friends and devoted supporters. Young India can never forget the services of Sir Henry Cotton and when the history of New India will be written I am sure Sir Henry's name will find an honoured mention."<sup>169</sup> This was a view which at that time much of politicized India, outside the small group of revolutionaries, undoubtedly shared.

<sup>168</sup> MacDonald to [H.E.A.] Cotton, 29 Oct. 1915, Cotton Collection, Microfilm Reel 1619.

<sup>169</sup> Lajpat Rai to [H.E.A.] Cotton, 3 Nov. 1915, *ibid*.







## **Indian Political Developments and the British Labour Party (1919-1924): Some reflections**

BY

MESBAHUDDIN AHMED

After the first World War the history of India took a different turn with the introduction of the Act of 1919 which, of course, was bitterly criticised by Indians for its inadequate provisions. The Labour Party at this time took noticeable interests in the affairs of British India. It is worthwhile to analyse here the different phases of the political developments since 1919 vis-a-vis the attitude of the Labour Party until the fall of the first Labour Government in October, 1924.

The Labour Party was split into two schools of thought with regard to the attitude toward the colonies and colonial peoples until the mid-1930's. One school of thought was in favour of granting colonies immediate freedom and the other held the view that Britain should retain her colonies while doing everything possible to improve conditions of the colonial people. By 1931 the latter school had fairly completely won the field and there were no longer many serious proposals advanced for the immediate freeing of the colonies. The British Labour Party found itself faced with the problems which arose from the fact that Britain was a member of the British Commonwealth of Nations. It supported the furthering of the process whereby the colonies of the past have developed into the Dominions, equal in status to the mother country. The party not only attacked the slowness of progress toward promised political independence in the colonies and their economic exploitation for the sole benefit of the mother country, but also extended its criticisms to include the Colonial Office, Colonial Service and the mechanics of colonial administration. These criticisms, in the main, centred on (1) the lack of parliamentary interest in and control of colonial affairs, (2) insufficient participation by native peoples in Colonial governments and in the Colonial Service, and (3) the poor calibre of men chosen for posts in the Colonial Office and Colonial Service and the inadequate training given them after their selection.



Labour's programme for the colonies included, among other things, putting an end to exploitation of the colonies for the benefit of non-natives, political advancement of the colonies toward the eventual goal of freedom and more effective parliamentary supervision of colonial affairs. It may be pointed out that the first Labour Government made no significant contribution to the evolution of the Empire into the Commonwealth. In spite of a strong tradition of anti-imperialism, in office the party showed an awareness of the political and economic interdependence of the Empire. Colonial Secretary J. H. Thomas announced that there was no desire to detract from the greatness of the Empire, which was safe in the hands to which it had been entrusted; he desired to promote its welfare by drawing closer the ties that bound it together.

The Labour Party accepted the right of the Indian people to govern themselves, but it recognised that the problem involved in developing self-governing institutions in a great continent inhabited by peoples who differ in language, race, and creed was no easy one. The party was sympathetic toward nationalism and on record as favouring a solution based on self-determination. But they opposed the obstructive tactics of the Indians in their movement against the British Government. They seemed to have sought to give to the Indian masses the potential power of bettering their economic conditions by political action. C. R. Attlee said, "There is no particular gain in handing over the peasants and workers of India to be exploited by their own capitalists and landlords. Nationalism is a creed that may be sustained with great self-sacrifice and idealism, but may shelter class domination and intolerance of minorities as well as economic exploitation."<sup>1</sup> The Labour Party maintained that it was impossible for an alien race to overcome the various evils which were closely bound up with the whole conceptions of the Indian people and it was the Indians themselves who could work out their salvation.

During the first two decades of the twentieth century, India oscillated back and forth between repression and conciliation as the British Government gathered its forces for the approaching World War. The year 1917 was a milestone in India's advance to freedom. The general nature of the British Government's views on India's reforms was outlined to the House of Commons by the Secretary of State for India,

<sup>1</sup> C. R. Attlee, *The Labour Party in Perspective and 12 years Later*, p.174.



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Edwin Montagu on 20 August 1917. He declared, "The policy of His Majesty's Government, with which the Government of India are in complete accord, is that of increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration, and the gradual development of self-governing institutions, with a view to the progressive realisation of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire. They have decided that substantial steps in this direction should be taken as soon as possible, and that it is of the highest importance, as a preliminary to considering what these steps should be, that there should be, a free and informal exchange of opinion between those in authority at home and in India." He further added, "progress in this policy can only be achieved by successive stages. The British Government and the Government of India, on whom the responsibility lies for the welfare and advancement of the Indian peoples, must be the judges of the time and measure of each advance, and they must be guided by the co-operation received from those upon whom new opportunities of service will thus be conferred, and by the extent to which it is found that confidence can be reposed in their sense of responsibility. Ample opportunity will be afforded for public discussion of the proposals, which will be submitted in due course to Parliament."<sup>2</sup>

As to the significance of the pronouncement Professor Coupland indicates that the first part which refers to the increasing association of Indians in every branch of administration contains nothing new; it simply reiterates which was implicitly contained in the Charter Act of 1833 and the Queen's Proclamation of 1857. The second part of it is a new one. What was held to be an impossibility in 1909 and in 1912 was deemed to be feasible and desirable in 1917. According to Coupland, the phrase 'realisation of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire' clearly implied that India 'could acquire a real nationhood which could be embodied, as in the Dominions, in a national system of government.'<sup>3</sup>

The complete constitutional proposals in the report published by Secretary of State Montagu and Viceroy Lord Chelmsford in July 1918 conceded responsible government only partially at the provincial level by letting the three departments of education, health and local govern-

<sup>2</sup> Debates of the House of Commons, Aug. 20, 1917, Column 1695-1696.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Suda J.P.'s *The Indian National Movement*, p. 165.



ment be transferred to elected ministers. This system, known as dyarchy, was the brain-child of Lionel Curtis, a member of the Round Table group of Imperial Federationists, and a product of Lord Milner's 'Kindergarten'. Legislation based on this report was enacted in 1919. The Government of India Act, 1919, provided a new constitution for British India. It not only dealt with the fundamental problems of government but it also contained many specific administrative regulations. To the chagrin of Indian nationalists, the British Parliament retained the power to settle the most important questions concerning India; the Secretary of State still held much authority; and the Governor-General in Council lost little actual power. The Act did, however, effect decentralisation in India; it introduced representative government both at the centre and in the provinces; and it remedied grievances concerning the civil service and the cost of the India Office in London.

Although well received in Britain, the Government of India Act 1919, met with violent opposition in India. Even moderates declared the reforms in the Act and its supplementary schedule ill-conceived and inadequate. The Congress under the control of B. G. Tilak and even more radical elements, demanded the amendment of the Montford proposals to include dyarchy in the central government, complete autonomy and responsible government in the provinces, and a 15 year deadline for full responsible government at the centre. Montagu's reform principles were, however, followed by harsh, repressive recommendations made by Justice Rowlatt's committee. These recommendations extended the war time emergency powers for detention and summary trial for sedition. "The fundamental principles of justice have been uprooted and the constitutional rights of the people have been violated at the time when there is no danger to the State," wrote Jinnah in his letter to the Viceroy, "by an overfretful and incompetent bureaucracy which is neither responsible to the people nor in touch with real public opinion."<sup>4</sup> Gandhi condemned the Rowlatt Acts as "symptoms" of "a deep-seated disease in the governing body." He called upon all Indians to pledge themselves to refuse civilly to obey such "unjust, subversive" laws, declaring a nationwide hartal in the first week of April 1919, as a prelude to the launching of a national satyagraha (passive resistance) campaign.

<sup>4</sup> Jinnah to Chelmsford, March 28, 1919, reprinted in Saiyid, M. H., *Mohammed Ali Jinnah*, pp. 238-39.



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During the agitation against these Acts, Brigadier Dyer was called in to restore order. Unaware of a ban on public gatherings of any sort on 13 April several thousand assembled in a walled garden, Jallianwala Bagh at Amritsar. To this place Dyer marched a small company of soldiers. The soldiers barred the only exit and were ordered to fire on the crowd. Dyer's troops fired for ten minutes, pouring 1,650 rounds of live ammunition into the unarmed mass of trapped humanity at point blank range. Some four hundred Indians were left dead, and twelve hundred wounded, and when the Brigadier and his force withdrew at sunset from the garden they had turned it into a national graveyard.

The point in the inquiry which brought the racial issue to a head was Brigadier Dyer's defence. He made it clear that he went down to the Jallianwala Bagh intending not only to disperse an illegal assembly, but also to punish the crowd in a manner which would be an example to the whole Province (the Punjab).

'I fired and continued to fire until the crowd dispersed, and I consider this is the least amount of firing which would produce the necessary moral and widespread effect... If more troops had been at hand the casualties would have been greater in proportion. It was no longer a question of merely dispersing the crowd, but one of producing a sufficient moral effect from a military point of view not only on those who were present, but more especially throughout the Punjab'.<sup>5</sup>

When disciplinary action was taken against him and certain other officers, his action and his attitude were supported by a large section of the Press, by many members of the House of Commons, by an overwhelming majority of the Lords, and later in the 'obiter dictum' of a judge. This had poisoned much of the political atmosphere. Nonetheless, as late as December 1919, the Congress was willing under protest to work the reforms so as to secure an early establishment of full responsible Government.

The British Labour movement reacted to these Indian developments since 1914 in different ways. Three Independent Labour Party members — George Lansbury, John Scurr and David Graham Pole

<sup>5</sup> E. Thompson & G. T. Garratt, *Rise and fulfilment of British Rule in India*, p. 610.



joined as members of the executive committee of the London branch of the Home Rule for India League. Hyndman got his party to demand the 'emancipation of India from British domination at an early date'. At Baptista's suggestion the Hull Trades and Labour Council in January 1918 put on the Labour Party Conference agenda a resolution spelling out in detail how, within twenty years, a dominion constitution was to be given to India based on provincial autonomy and a federal parliament. Party policy, as expounded later in the election campaign of December 1918, was more moderate than this. It clearly followed the Montford report.

The Montford proposals came to the House of Commons on June 5, 1919, as the Government of India Bill. On the Second Reading, B. C. Spoor (labourite), speaking for his party, gave the Bill "a qualified approval", conceding that it did give a limited measure of responsible government in the provinces but criticising the autocratic character of the central government and the narrowness of the franchise. J. C. Wedgwood (labourite) went into details in his criticisms of the Bill. Wedgwood said that the Bill was defective in four respects; (1) lack of control of purse, (2) the principle of indirect election and the small size of the Indian (central) Legislative Assembly, (3) the smallness of the electorate, and (4) communal and interest representation. The vote in the House of Commons on the amendment for transferring more subjects to Indian responsible ministers may be given as an index of the action of the Parliamentary Labour Party on the whole Bill. The amendment was defeated by a vote of ayes 47 to noes 260. Of the 47 ayes, the labourites contributed 40.

On the Third Reading of the Bill on December 5, William Adamson, Chairman of the Parliamentary Labour Party, summarized the attitude of his party towards the Bill in its final form in the following terms:

"The Labour Party are prepared to admit that the Bill is a definite move in the right direction, our principal criticism being that it does not go far enough, and that we are failing to take the fullest advantage of the help of the people of India themselves to assist us in the successful accomplishment of the great task we have in hand. The Bill gives to the people of India a measure of control in the various provinces, but no real control in the Central Government. This is a mistake and will rob us of the sympathetic cooperation of some of the best elements of the population of India. We also regret the



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very limited franchise which this Bill provides. . . . On the face of it, it is absurd that only five million out of a total population of two hundred fifty million have been enfranchised by this Bill."<sup>6</sup>

In Hyndman's Party there had been a move to propose granting only such measures of self-government to India as might be thoroughly appreciated and beneficially utilised by the majority of the population concerned. Hyndman's resolution in favour of self-determination was carried only after he had argued, following his old friend Dadabhai Naoroji, that poverty and inequality in India was due to the drain of wealth by British interests. The concern for civil liberties reflected in the 'Declaration of Rights' was shared by all sections of the Labour movement when reports about the Rowlatt legislation and the Amritsar tragedy reached England. On May 22, during the regular debate on India, Neil M'Lean and Spoor (both labourites) moved for the suspension of the two Rowlatt Bills. (These two Bills were drawn up embodying the chief recommendations, which among other clauses gave judges power in certain affected regions to try political cases by special procedure, and the provinces were given the power to intern agitators.) Towards the end of 1919, Wedgwood protested in the House of Commons against the Amritsar incident, declaring that "the Germans never did anything worse in Belgium. This damns us for all time."<sup>7</sup>

Indian nationalism had its martyrs on a large scale, and Gandhi was to quote Amritsar and the Rowlatt Acts among the factors which turned him towards a policy of non-co-operation in 1920. The Congress called for a boycott of the legislatures, law courts, schools, and for the giving up of titles. The progress of the non-co-operation movement is summed up in the following words by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose:

"Throughout the country there was unparalleled enthusiasm. The 'triple boycott' had been fairly successful. Though the legislatures were not empty, no Congressman had gone there. The lawyers had on the whole made a good response and the student community had come out of the ordeal with flying colours."<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Debates of the House of Commons, 5th series, Vol. 122, c. 793-799.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 123, c.1230.

<sup>8</sup> Bose, Subash Chandra, *The Indian Struggle*, pp. 55-56.



Gandhi drafted a new Congress constitution at this time, whose first article became its credo: "the attainment of Swaraj (Self-rule) by the people of India by all legitimate and peaceful means." The revolutionary impact of Gandhi's constitution was to prove as significant as that of his programme. The Mahatma promised his followers 'Swaraj' in one year — by December 31, 1921. Gandhi defined Swaraj as neither more nor less than "that we can maintain our separate existence without the presence of the English", or put another way, "to get rid of our helplessness". India was the fabled tiger reared among goats, and his was her roar of recognition, reminding this non-violent tiger of her natural identity.

The defeat of Turkey and the destruction of the Turkish Empire led to the Khilafat (Caliphate) movement. This mass organisation of Muslims gave a religious bent to their grievances. Though Indian Muslims had never paid particular deference to the Caliph (the Sultan of Turkey), his disposition gave grounds for agitation. A campaign was organised in the north to move Muslims from India to Afghanistan, but no preparations had been made and great suffering resulted. The Khilafat movement combined with the Congress in its civil disobedience campaign, but violence broke out on the Malabar coast. Communal tensions were then inflamed when a mixed Arab race known as Moplahs began a reign of terror over their Hindu neighbours.

The non-co-operation movement gathered momentum throughout 1921, and British efforts to steal its thunder by arranging a visit for the Prince of Wales in November backfired, the black flag reception and boycott of royalty ominously demonstrating the depth of Indian alienation from and hostility toward the Raj (Crown). Government repression came swift and fierce in the wake of the Prince's visit, and by the year's end some twenty thousand Indians were jailed; instead of crushing resistance, however, such tactics only incited greater disaffection. When repression mounted Gandhi consoled his followers by redefining Swaraj as abandonment of the fear of death. "It is not surprising", as expressed in the Report of the Indian Statutory Commission, "that Mr. Gandhi never found it easy to define what "Swaraj" would mean in actual political practice: his accounts of it varied from time to time and were always nebulous. But the critical side of his doctrine was clear enough. Mr. Gandhi preached that British rule had impoverished



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India and destroyed its liberties. The existing Government and all it stood for were 'Satanic', and the only cure was to end it."<sup>9</sup> As 1921 passed into history without the advent of Swaraj, there was widespread disillusionment among those who had literally believed in Gandhi's promised deadline.

The tragedy of Chauri-Chaura in the United Provinces, where twenty-two Indian policemen were burned to death by an infuriated mob of civil resisters, seems to have given Gandhi a severe shock. He was surprised that non-co-operation could not remain non-violent. Being terrified by the prospect of finding India liberated overnight, without either the British army or police to assist Congress in maintaining order and preventing mass murder, Gandhi suspended the Civil Disobedience movement and in March 1922 its author and inspirer was arrested and sentenced to six years' imprisonment. After two years, however, he was released for an appendicitis operation, but he did not resume active political agitation until 1939.

Most labourites condemned the non-co-operation movement of Gandhi. But Ben Spoor and Fenner Brockway opined that 'Labour must not limit the right of an enchained nation in their struggle for salvation'. Josiah Wedgwood since 1919 always criticised the non-co-operation movement. In 1920 he was one of the delegates from the British Labour Party to the Nagpur conference of Congress. In criticising the decision of the conference which confirmed the principle of non-co-operation recommended by Gandhi to obtain self-rule by all legitimate and peaceful means Wedgwood said that it would make more difficult the union between the Congress, Indian nationalism and the British Labour Party. On another occasion Wedgwood affirmed that Indians must learn to exercise their responsibilities in organising an opposition in the Assembly on the model of the Labour Party in the House of Commons.<sup>10</sup> Adamson, the Chairman of the Labour Party, criticised the Act of 1919 on the ground that "it does not go far enough, and that we are failing to take the people of India themselves to assist in the successful accomplishment of the great tasks we have in hand."<sup>11</sup>

The Labour Party, at its 1920 Conference in Scarborough, after

<sup>9</sup> *Report of the Indian Statutory Commission*, Vol. I, p. 248.

<sup>10</sup> Debates of the House of Commons, June 15, 1922, c. 655.

<sup>11</sup> R.C. Majumdar, *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. 11, *Struggle for Freedom*, p. 438.



reaffirming its stand for the principle of self-determination, demanded the 'full and frank application of this principle in the reorganisation of the Government of India in such a way as to satisfy all the legitimate aspirations of the Indian people.' One part of the resolution put forward by Ben Spoor, Member of Parliament read as follows:

"The Conference denies the right of any Government to govern a country against the will of the majority; and while expressing the hope that all the peoples of the British Empire will prefer to remain as parts of that Empire so soon as their aspirations have been dealt with in a thoroughly conciliatory manner by the granting of adequate measures of autonomy, it declares that the final decision must rest with those people themselves."

Further the Conference expressed its sympathy with the sufferers of Amritsar, demanded the trial of the military officers responsible for the firing, and called for "the recall of the Viceroy as the only proof that can be given to India that this country is deeply moved by what has taken place and does not mean it to be repeated."<sup>12</sup>

John Scurr, a delegate from Buckingham Labour Party while speaking in that Conference, appealed to the Labour Members to insist in the House of Commons that the Press Act (which introduced censorship) and the Rowlatt Act should come off the Statute Book. They must give the Indian people the liberty to say and do what they liked in the sphere of their political destinies. Mr. B. P. Wadia, of the Indian National Congress, one of the delegation attending the Conference, expressed his country's thanks and observed that in passing that resolution, and marking it in the way they had done, they had healed to a certain extent the wounds caused by some of the Britishers in India.

Mention may be made of the resolution moved by A. J. Brobin in the 28th Annual Conference of the Independent Labour Party in the same year which declared: "That this Conference reaffirms that the fundamental right of a small nation to determine its own destiny is superior to the alleged military and strategic needs of its more powerful neighbours. That complete autonomy be granted to Ireland, India and

<sup>12</sup> Report of the 20th Annual Conference of the Labour Party, p.156.



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Egypt in accordance with the expressed wishes of the populations of these lands."<sup>13</sup>

A curtain of incomprehension came between Indian nationalists and British Labour in 1921. This is indicated in the absence of any questions on Indian matters from the Labour benches, except for a warning by Spoor in December 1921 against repressive measures. A resolution adopted by the National Joint Council of the executive committees of the Trade Union Council, the Parliamentary Labour Party and the Labour Party urged 'both Indian Democrats and His Majesty's government to join in a conference, composed of all shades of political thought, to consider the possibilities of a peace based upon (1) an amnesty, (2) the dropping of the practices of non-co-operation, (3) a time-limit for the transition stages of partial self-government; (4) fresh elections, at least to the Legislative Assembly."<sup>14</sup>

The resolution was indeed a skillful compromise formula which aimed at breaking the deadlock between the Viceroy and Gandhi. In December 1921 the Viceroy had braved cabinet displeasure by making overtures for a round-table conference with Gandhi and other leaders, but only if the non-co-operation movement was called off and the conference met without prior commitments. Gandhi was under pressure from the Liberals and some Congressmen not to push the civil disobedience to extremes if a conference could take place and he wavered. The Labour Party resolution, by suggesting that the Government should accept a time-table for the period of transition to self-government, did make an effective concession to the nationalist point of view.

In the Edinburgh Conference of the British Labour Party in 1922 Mr. Tom Shah, Member of Parliament, moved a resolution which approved of the support given by the Parliamentary Labour Party to the Government of India Act and urged them to 'support any further legislation in the direction of securing for the people of India the same measure of self-government which is in operation in Canada, Australia and South Africa'.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Report of the Annual Conference of the Independent Labour Party, 1920 (Glasgow), p. 95.

<sup>14</sup> Labour Party, Report of the Annual Conference, 1922, p. 37.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 204.



The collapse of the non-co-operation movement in 1922 left India in the relaxed condition of a patient released from a bout of fever. There was an interval of apathy in the public feeling which was used for a reconsideration of policy by the various parties concerned. On the Muslim side there was a return to Indian horizons of communal politics. Within the Congress there was much heart-searching.

While Gandhi languished in jail, the leadership of Congress passed to C. R. Das, a great Bengali leader, and Motilal Nehru from the United Provinces, both of whom favoured taking advantage of the new Government of India Act. By standing for election to the councils and fighting from within their Chambers to paralyze the machinery of government, Das and Nehru argued, Congress could advance rapidly toward its goal of Swaraj. In 1923 these Swarajists won a majority of India's political activists to their policy of "non-co-operation from within councils." The Congress secured 45 seats in the election of Legislative Assembly, which was enough to fulminate, but not to wreck without assistance, and enough strength in Bengal and Bombay to prevent the formation of ministries. For the next few years the party fulfilled the role of nationalist opposition at the centre, and was increasingly involved in the give and take of group politics in the provinces. Stalwart cohorts of the Mahatma Gandhi, however, led by Chakravarti Rajagopalachari of Madras and Rajendra Prasad of Bihar, insisted upon a "no changes" continuation of Gandhi's policy, touring the sub-continent to encourage hand spinning and other aspects of Gandhi's constructive programme.

While dyarchy was being worked under difficulties, certain other important developments took place, the first of which was progress towards Indianisation of the services. In 1924 it was agreed, on the basis of the recommendations of the Lee Commission, that recruitment of Indians to the Indian Civil Service should proceed at such a pace that within 15 years half the members of that Service would be Indian. An equally important but less spectacular development was the gradual recognition of India's right to be represented in international conferences. Such representation at Imperial Conferences had been normal from 1918 onwards, and soon after this India took her own right in the League of Nations and the International Labour Office.

Just as the non-co-operation campaign formed the background for the work of the first legislatures, so Hindu-Muslim antagonism was by far the most significant movement during the lifetime of their successors. Movements were set on foot by both Hindus and Muslims for



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the reconversion of classes which were said to have lapsed to the other faith. Suspicion and bitterness were the inevitable result, and in the excitement of religious festivals, occasions for dispute, were only too easy to find. By the middle of 1923 communal riots were of almost monthly occurrence. In 1924 fierce outbursts occurred in many of the greater cities of the North.

It is not surprising that against this background of bitterness the various attempts to find a constitutional formula on which Hindus and Muslims could agree failed completely. In 1924 the Muslim League met apart from the Congress for the first time since 1919 and laid down six 'basic principles'. The two most important of them were that which dealt with separate electorates and that which insisted that the new constitution should be federal 'with full and complete provincial autonomy'. The 1924 proposals of the League received no serious consideration by the Congress even though both parties were in accord in desiring parliamentary self-government, and it is possible that the Congress thus lost the last practical chance of preserving the unity of India.

Labour's parliamentary strategy in 1923 was aimed at preventing the Viceroy's use of his special powers to pass bills rejected by the Assembly so that the 'non-co-operators' in India would not have additional grist to their mill. As late as that year the leader of Labour Party Ramsay MacDonald attended a meeting at the Queen's Hall held on 27 June to support the Indian demand of equality of status with the Dominions, and delivered a long speech in the course of which he referred to the Rowlat Act as "that stupid piece of political blundering" which "has been the cause of all the troubles". He denounced that section of the British people who had gone back on the war-time promise of self-government for India. He also declared that "most of us who have liberal minds must accept Dominion Status for India as the essential condition of imperial unity."<sup>16</sup>

Naturally, high hopes were raised in the minds of many Indians when, in January, 1924, the Labour Party came into office with Ramsay MacDonald as the Prime Minister of Britain. It may be noted that the leadership had no sympathy with the resort to violence, obstructive tactics in the legislative councils, and boycotts. On the eve of taking office, in an open message to India, MacDonald insisted upon constitutional methods: "No party in Great Britain will be cowed by threats

<sup>16</sup> R.C. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, p. 438.



of force or by policies designed to bring government to a standstill.”<sup>17</sup> The Secretary of State for India, Lord Olivier, a Fabian, stressed peaceful evolution. He believed in self-government as the eventual goal but also in careful preparation for it; the best procedure for the moment was to make the Act of 1919 operate successfully as a step toward independence.<sup>18</sup> The Prime Minister, J. R. MacDonald, in April 1924 appealed to India in these terms:

“We know of the serious condition of affairs in India, and we want to improve it. As Lord Olivier says, without equivocation Dominion Status for India is the idea and the ideal of the Labour Government. If I may say so to our Indian friends: Do your bit for British Democracy; keep your faith in a British Government”.<sup>19</sup>

When the Viceroy Lord Reading allowed the Home member of the Indian Government, Sir Malcolm Hailey, to state that the ultimate aim of responsible government in India might not mean Dominion Status, mistrust of government intentions spread to the moderates, who united to pass a resolution demanding a round-table conference to discuss constitutional changes. MacDonald and Olivier justified their inaction with reference to their minority position in Parliament, and by a belief that the non-co-operation movement in India had not given the Montford reforms a fair trial. Reading was peeved at losing the political initiative, but he had been as much against a full-fledged parliamentary inquiry into the reforms at that stage as were the ministers in Britain. The Swarajist (self-rule) demand was supported in Labour circles by the Independent Labour Party, inside the cabinet by Wedgwood, who had been in touch with Motilal Nehru and who would not accept the parliamentary situation as hopeless until the liberals had been sounded. MacDonald, irritated and yet sensitive about Indian accusations of bad faith, set up a Cabinet committee on Indian affairs.

While speaking on Indian affairs in the House of Commons on 15 April 1924 Richards, the Under Secretary of State for India said, “... and I may add that it appears to His Majesty’s Government important, for the purposes of this inquiry, that the views of representative Indian politicians, who have come to the Assembly in a perfectly

17 *The Times*, January 26, 1924.

18 Brand, Carl F., *The British Labour Party*, p.103.

19 *The Labour Magazine*, Vol. 8, December, 1929, p. 343.



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constitutional way, and who advocate modifications of the Constitution in regard to any practical defects in the provisions of the 1919 Act, should be given full opportunity of constitutional expression and consideration before the recommendations of the Government are finally formulated. It is the desire of His Majesty's Government to arrange, in concert with the Government of India, how best such opportunities may be provided."<sup>20</sup>

From such a statement it can be apprehended that the Labour Government was in favour of some sort of positive changes in the Indian political spectrum. But one wonders how it sanctioned the Bengal Ordinance of 25 October, 1924 which empowered police officers not only to arrest, but to imprison indefinitely, and person whom they suspected of having the intention of committing certain crimes. It provided for trial by special commissioners, appointed by Government, but it failed to provide any protection to the accused, in as much as the accused could not be present at the trial or be defended by a lawyer; further this mock-trial could not be claimed as a matter of right; and finally the Ordinance dispensed with the necessity of even framing charges against people deprived of their liberty and allowed to rot in jail for an indefinite period of time.

As the validity of an Ordinance only stood good for six months, the Government introduced a Bill embodying the provisions of the Ordinance in the Bengal Legislative Council when it was rejected by men of all parties — Moderates, Independents and Swarajists, Hindus and Muslims — uniting in its condemnation. But in spite of its rejection by the Legislature, the Government exercised its arbitrary powers, and "certified" it, and it became law.

"As the Labour Government sanctioned this epitome of iniquity", says V. H. Rutherford in his book 'India and the Labour Party', "we understand why it is charged with the betrayal of India. Instead of passing this Ordinance, instead of bowing the knee to Lord Reading, the Viceroy, who was once Lord Chief Justice of England, and upon whose advice it was passed, the Labour Government ought to have recalled this breaker of the law, and sent out a strong and far seeing member of the Labour Party as Viceroy, who would have brought about a union of hearts between Britain and India by governing India

<sup>20</sup> Debates of the House of Commons, 15 April, 1924, c. 1288.



in accordance with Indian opinion as expressed by the Indian Legislatures".<sup>21</sup> Lord Olivier was under no illusion as to the nature of the Ordinance. Three months after the Labour Government was replaced by the Conservative, he himself raised the question in the House of Commons and indicated that the Ordinance practically took away any protection for liberty established by British law.<sup>22</sup>

The attitude of the Labour Party here seems to be paradoxical. And it becomes all the more apparent when we see Prime Minister MacDonald in his appeal to India, expressing with regard to the inquiry on Indian Political affairs by the Cabinet committee that "an inquiry is being held by the Government which means that inquiry to be a serious one." We mean that the inquiry shall produce result which will be a basis for consideration of the Indian Constitution and its working, and its possibilities, which we hope will help Indians to co-operate on the way towards the creation of a system which is self-government".<sup>23</sup> Before that committee had reported, however the Labour Government had been replaced by a Tory Government; the doctrine of continuity of policy was forgotten. India was again given reasons to believe that she could place no reliance on British promises. As the Labour Party used to profess their disapproval of imperialism in any part of the globe it was assumed in India that the Labour Party would play a vital and favourable role in their movement against the British Crown. But in practice one finds in sheer dismay that by and large there was a big gap between the utterances and actions of the Labour Party. Leaving aside a few Labourites who favoured some positive changes in the Indian political sphere, the party as a whole was seemingly not sympathetic to the Indian cause.

Though the Labour Party in its annual conferences during the period under discussion affirmed its stand for the principle of self-determination, it failed to bring any effective change in the Indian political horizon. At times the party was bold in its attitude when it went to the extent of demanding trial for the military officers responsible for the Amritsar tragedy and urging recall of the Viceroy from India as a gesture of sympathy to the Indians. It appears that the Independent Labour Party had a more favourable attitude to the struggle for emancipation of India from British domination. Members

21 V.H. Rutherford, *India and The Labour Party*, p. 9.

22 *Indian Annual Register*, 1, p. 314.

23 *The Labour Magazine*, Vol. 8, December, 1929, p. 343.



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like George Lansbury and David Graham Pole were all supporting the people of India in their fight against the British Government.

During the short-lived Labour Government which came to power in 1924, Indians expected some changes of policy that would ensure the fulfilment of their cherished goal; but the Government, to the utter surprise of all, gave a shattering blow to them by sanctioning the infamous Bengal Ordinance. All it did during their term of office which survived for only nine months was to set up a Cabinet Committee which was to make an inquiry into Indian affairs and to report on which basis some improvements could be worked out. But the effort could not produce any result because of the fall of the Labour Government.







## Indian Participation in Labour Politics in Trinidad, 1919-1939

BY

SAHADEO BASDEO

One of the unintended consequences of the first Great War was the termination of East Indian immigration of Trinidad and shortly thereafter the abolition of indentureship. This grand imperial undertaking which had introduced some 144,000 Indian immigrants to Trinidad by 1917 had drastically altered the balance of ethnic forces in the colony.<sup>1</sup> Though many East Indians had not fully established themselves in the mainstream of Trinidadian life when the treaty of Versailles was signed, there were others who like members of the black sector of the society were affected by the influences and forces unleashed by the war: the struggle for human rights; the campaign against colonialism; the manifestation of democratic ideas and ideals; the rise of socialism and trade unionism and the struggle for self-government. It is in this context that the East Indian population in the aftermath of the Great War were to seek rights and privileges denied them under the rigidity of the indentureship system.

The struggle for such rights and privileges which had begun in the nineteenth century and had taken the form of isolated strikes, revolts and revengeful acts against estate officials, was now to continue.<sup>2</sup> But this time the struggle for social justice was to be more assertive than in the past largely because of the new relationship between the master and the ex-indentured worker. Indeed, with the end of World War I, East

1 Of this number some 25% had returned to India at the end of their contract.

2 See for example J. C. Jha, "East Indian Pressure Groups in Trinidad 1897-1921", (Unpublished Paper presented at the Conference of Caribbean Historians, U. W.I., St. Augustine, April 1973), p.3; Donald Wood, *Trinidad in Transition*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1868), p. 116; D. W. Comins, *Note on Emigration from India to Trinidad*, (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1893), p. 42; Judith Ann Weller, *The East Indian Indenture in Trinidad*, (Rio Piedras: University of Puerto Rico, 1968) p. 49.



Indians in Trinidad began to participate more fully and actively in the colonial campaign for social, economic and political reform; and within a few years were to join with other groups in the society in a collective struggle for such advancement.

It is against this background that this paper is being written. It will attempt to examine Indian working class involvement in the politics of labour reform during the period of 1919 to 1939. More specifically it will attempt: to examine the nature and extent of Indian involvement in labour politics during this period; to assess the contribution which Indian working class leadership as represented by Adrian Cola Rienzi after 1935, contributed to the building of working class solidarity in Trinidad thereby throwing a bridge across the ethnic divide between Indian and black workers.

Indian participation in labour politics in Trinidad can be traced to the time of indenture. The withholding of labour through strike action, open revolts and arson were all tried in the nineteenth century in attempts to win economic and social demands.<sup>3</sup> But whatever methods of protest were taken they were invariably put down with the utmost severity. As Professor Hugh Tinker has reminded us "even when the coolies were granted some of their demands (usually through the intervention of the Immigration Department) their ringleaders were always singled out for punishment."<sup>4</sup> The absence of effective labour organization among Indians had helped to precipitate this state of affairs. But then this was the deliberate policy of the indentureship system:

Any effective protest depended upon the presence of Indians with some experience in the use of force: or alternatively upon the chance of homogeneous group of people with the same background being together upon one estate. If the workers on one estate protested, others might hear and follow the example. But the effectiveness of the isolation which the system enforced was apparent in the absence of combined activities.<sup>5</sup>

It was only after the end of indenture that Indian estate workers in

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Hugh Tinker, *A New System of Slavery: The Export of Indian Labour Overseas 1830-1920*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 227.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 226.



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Trinidad began to organize in a small way both on and off the plantations.

The opportunity for Indians to participate in labour politics presented itself once again in 1919. Like other colonial workers in Trinidad, the Indian labourers were influenced by post-war economic conditions, newspaper coverage of the Russian Revolution and the contact made with ex-soldiers of the British West Indies Regiment upon demobilisation.<sup>6</sup> These influences helped to put many in the category of workers whom David A. Headley, President of the Trinidad Workingmen's Association (T.W.A.) in 1921, described as a different class of workers from that ... encountered twenty or more years ago." As Headley pointed out:

The workingman of today is not prepared to allow himself to be lured into satisfaction with whatever the generous overlord who seeks to exploit his labour may generously dole out to him in the form of wages or under the guise of philanthropy ... Capital must realise that it has an entirely new situation to face, that the momentous issues into which it has been plunged, through the new thought of the new ideas in this new era, must be sought out ... in the broader principles of give and take and on the higher and loftier plane of conciliation and compromise.<sup>7</sup>

It is amidst these influences that many Indians gravitated towards the T.W.A. in an attempt to win labour and economic demands. The decision taken by some Indians to join the Association in 1919 was quite understandable. East Indian indenture had only recently ended. It was therefore premature to expect Indian working class unity particularly when it is remembered that one of the major accomplishments of the indenture system was its success in dividing Indians on the plantations for so many years.<sup>8</sup> Secondly, many Indians did not

<sup>6</sup> Sahadeo Basdeo, "Labour Organisation and Labour Reform in Trinidad, 1919 to 1939", (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada), pp. 22-28.

<sup>7</sup> David A. Headley, *Labour and Life*, Labour Series. No. 1, (Port of Spain: The Trinidad Workingmen's Association, 1921), pp. 4-5.

<sup>8</sup> Tinker, *A New System of Slavery*, pp. 222-26. It is important to note that the exploitative nature of the system was entrenched through the adoption by planters of the shrewd policy of 'divide and rule' in the selection of plantation officials from among the Indians. In appointing drivers for instance, Creole



consider it worthwhile to seek labour and industrial demands separately from other groups especially when such demands were similar and were being sought from common colonial masters. Most important, in 1919, the T.W.A. had demonstrated quite convincingly that it was able to win demands for colonial workers. This was clearly evidenced by the industrial settlement arrived at between the Trinidad Lake Asphalt Company and the Association which had represented the asphalt stevedores.<sup>9</sup> It is therefore not surprising that in the strike-torn year of 1919 when Indian workers had downed tools at the Waterworks and Sewage Department of the Port of Spain City Council, the Trinidad Rice Mills Limited,<sup>10</sup> the Port of Spain Harbour,<sup>11</sup> and sugar plantations in Montserrat, Couva, Cunupia, Esperanza and Chaguanas where one Indian worker was killed,<sup>12</sup> they became attracted to the T.W.A. Indeed the Association, a predominantly black working class organization in 1919, slowly began to attract Indian political support as the decade of the 1920's progressed. For though such groups as the East Indian National Association (EINA), the East Indian National Congress (EINC) and the Young East Indian Party were in existence in 1921, they were no more than middle class Indian organizations concerned primarily with political and constitutional problems as they affected the position of Indians in Trinidad.<sup>13</sup> In post-war conditions therefore some Indian workers, who recognised the value of co-operative organized effort as a means of obtaining industrial and social reform gradually joined the Association.

Though Indians had taken the initiative in joining the Association, the executive of the T.W.A., strategically responded in 1924 to increase its Indian membership by unanimously supporting the election of Captain A. A. Cipriani as President of the Association. It was felt that

blacks were placed over Indians, "Madrasses over men from Upper India" and high caste Indians under the supervision of a low caste driver. Also, Indians from one common area in India were not put to work on the same estate or on adjacent estates for fear of combined protest.

<sup>9</sup> *Trinidad Guardian*, May 27, 1919.

<sup>10</sup> *Trinidad Guardian*, March 18, 1919.

<sup>11</sup> *Trinidad Guardian*, March 12, 1919.

<sup>12</sup> *Trinidad Guardian*, December 10, 1919. An Indian estate labourer was killed on the Woodford Lodge Estate and a white plantation official was arrested for murder. See C.O. 295/526. Chancellor to Milner, January 27, 1920.

<sup>13</sup> Jha, "East Indian Pressure groups in Trinidad", pp. 13-14; *Trinidad Guardian*, July 28, 1922.



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Cipriani's leadership would help to combat any apparent cleavage between Indians and blacks and consequently assist in the development of a united working class movement in Trinidad.<sup>14</sup> As Ryan has noted in a situation which demanded a neutral ethnic type, Cipriani, as a white man became a positive asset. This was particularly important since, for colonials,

whiteness was still a highly valued attribute ... To be white was to be blessed, to have the gift of grace. The masses especially the urban blacks, were flattered by Cipriani's championship of their cause. They likewise believed that as an interceding agent he would be more useful than one of their own—some one not so blessed.<sup>15</sup>

Under Cipriani's leadership the Association crystallized its labour manifesto and advocated the need for a trade union law, workmen's compensation, old age pension, minimum wage law, eight-hour working day and the abolition of child labour. The T.W.A. took this manifesto to Indian workers in the agricultural belt where it readily obtained support so much so that T.W.A. branches were soon formed in places like Chaguanas, Couva, Princes Town and San Fernando.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, it was the agricultural belt consisting predominantly of Indians that gave the Association its first Indian Vice-president and legislator Sarran Teelucksingh in 1925, and three years later, its second Indian legislator and executive official Timothy Roodal.<sup>17</sup> Though both men typified the rising Indian middle-class in Trinidad, they nevertheless became the principal spokesmen for the cause of the Indian working class both in the legislative council and the T.W.A.

Issues relating to the Indian working class were always considered important in T.W.A. decision-making circles. Throughout the second half of the 1920's Cipriani, Teelucksingh and Roodal were to air their views consistently on the need to improve labour and working conditions on the sugar estates and the urgent need to introduce labour

14 Basedo, "Labour Organisation and Labour Reform", pp. 77-78.

15 Selwyn Ryan, *Race and Nationalism in Trinidad and Tobago: A Study of Decolonisation in a Multi-Racial Society*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), p. 38.

16 C.O. 295/546, Wilson to Devonshire, January 22, 1923.

17 By 1928 both Teelucksingh and Roodal became Vice-presidents of the T.W.A.



legislative reform in specific areas. The practice of child labour on the sugar plantations in central Trinidad was one such area. In 1926 the prevalence of this practice was made public to F. O. Roberts, a British trade unionist who had visited such areas in Trinidad as Chaguanas, Couva and California to address T.W.A. branches in the sugar belt.<sup>18</sup> During his visit Roberts noted both the extent of the Indian working class presence in labour politics in Trinidad as well as the validity of what Cipriani was later to describe as the exploitation of children who were being "sweated, overworked and underpaid"<sup>19</sup> on the sugar estates in what was commonly known as the "para grass gang." As Roberts noted:

At the meetings which I ... addressed at ... Couva and Chaguanas I was struck with the intense enthusiasm displayed by the great crowds which attended. In these districts some startling things were recounted to me with regard to child labour and the fact that many children are not receiving the benefit of education.<sup>20</sup>

Labour issues of this kind received foremost attention from the T.W.A. and helped to increase its Indian support.<sup>21</sup> In addition, in 1929 C. F. Andrews, Gandhi's friend and emissary to Trinidad and Guyana, was so impressed by the work of the Association in the field of labour politics that he made a public plea for the unity of East Indian and black workers under the umbrella of the T.W.A in order to ensure legislative gains in labour reform.<sup>22</sup>

Through its Indian Vice-President Roodal, the T.W.A. took the cause of the Indian working class to London in 1930. There, he along with Cipriani addressed the Third British Commonwealth Labour Conference<sup>23</sup> on general colonial questions pertaining to Trinidad. Among

18 *Trinidad Guardian*, January 7, 1926.

19 *Trinidad Guardian*, April 9 & 10, 1926.

20 *Trinidad Guardian*, January 9, 1926.

21 See *Trinidad Guardian*, April 9, 1926 and *Labour Leader*, July 25, 1925 for official position of T.W.A. on the issue of child labour.

22 *Trinidad Guardian*, August 9 & 21, 1929.

23 The Third British Labour Commonwealth Conference like the two previous ones, was held under the auspices of the British Labour Movement (the Labour Party and the T.U.C.) and was attended by the delegates representing labour organisations from many British colonies and dominions.



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the topics raised was the need for the Imperial Government to reassess its economic policy towards the West Indian sugar industry; the need to institute trade unionism, minimum wage and old age pension laws; and the immediate inclusion in the Workmen's Compensation Act of 1926 of agricultural workers and domestic servants.<sup>24</sup> Cipriani pleaded special consideration for the agricultural worker in the sugar industry:

The case for sugar is at present our most serious ... problem, and one that I feel sure, is not thoroughly understood or fully appreciated. The fact that 90 per cent of the labouring classes in the colonies are either directly or indirectly dependent on the sugar industry for their existence is that which makes it loom large in the industrial, economical, and political life of the colonies to which we belong.<sup>25</sup>

While Roodal endorsed the Captain's view, he directed his comments specifically to the position of East Indian workers in Trinidad. Indians, he remarked, "were existing under conditions of low wages and poverty, and assistance for the sugar industry was essential for their welfare."<sup>26</sup>

The position which Roodal and the T. W. A. had taken in London undeniably helped to increase the Association's Indian membership in Trinidad. This increase was also stimulated by an external development. By 1930 there was a growing political awareness among the Indian population in Trinidad influenced largely by the struggle being waged in India by the Congress Party against the British rule. Strong support for the Indian independence movement came from the E.I.N.A., the E. I. N. C., and leading Indian professionals in the colony. In January 1930, the Indian population held a large meeting in Port of Spain to give moral and political support to the All India National Congress.<sup>27</sup> This meeting was addressed by such prominent Indians as Roodal, Adrian Cola Rienzi, A. L. Jamadar, E. Ramcharan, J.S. Dayanand Maharaj and Pundit Krishna Banerji, B.A., and resolutions were

24 Memorandum of Trinidad Workingmen's Association dated May 27, 1930, in *Report of the Third British Commonwealth Labour Conference held at Westminster Hall, House of Commons, London, between July 21 and July 25, 1930*, (London: The Trades Union Congress and Labour Party, 1930).

25 *Port of Spain Gazette*, September 7, 1930.

26 *Report of third British Labour Commonwealth Conference, 1930; Meeting of Fourth Session Held on July 24, 1930*, p. 24.

27 *Labour Leader*, January 4, 1930.



passed pledging support to the Congress Party in its "Nation-wide Non-Co-operation and boycott movement," and condemning the British Labour Government for failing to give immediate independence to India.<sup>28</sup> It was during this period of Indian participation in political affairs that Cipriani and the T.W.A. were to receive added Indian support.

First evidence of this in the 1930's was at a T.W.A. rally in Port of Spain where the Captain and Roodal delivered accounts of their activities in London. A "large number of East Indians", who hitherto had played only a limited role in colonial labour politics, had "travelled from the country districts to join their West Indian brothers in what they considered the common cause — the betterment of their social conditions."<sup>29</sup> Among them were their religious leaders as well as C.B. Mathura,<sup>30</sup> President of Young Indian Party in Trinidad, member of the T.W.A. and later editor of *The East India Weekly*.

Indian support for the T.W.A. however began to wane by 1934. Like black workers in the rapidly developing oil and asphalt industries, Indian workers soon felt the full impact of the Great Depression: growing unemployment, spiraling prices and low wages.<sup>31</sup> Indian workers were not prepared to tolerate Cipriani's constitutional labour politics if ready solutions to their serious plight were not found. As the depression mounted, the entire agricultural sector on which the bulk of the Indian population relied for a livelihood was brought to a state of near collapse. Workers in other areas of the economy were also affected particularly the cocoa sector where the advantages of increased production and good world prices experienced earlier in the century had now

28 *Ibid.*

29 *Port of Spain Gazettee*, November 4, 1930.

30 L. S. Smith, *Trinidad Who, What, Why*, (Port of Spain: Lloyed Sydney Smith, 1950), p. 289. Chandra Bahadoor Mathura, born Chaguanas, 1896. Educated Chaguanas C.M.I. Began political activities in 1911 holding many positions in the East Indian National Congress of which he was the Secretary in 1922. Founded Young Indian Party in 1921 and as Secretary, presented memorandum to Major Wood's Reform Commission. He edited and published the *East Indian Weekly* for 7 years. He visited West Indian Colonies on political missions including British Guiana 1935-1937. He joined the Trinidad Labour Party and represented labour in Jamaica in 1947 at the Caribbean Labour Congress, and Montego Bay Conference. He was a member of the Port of Spain City Council and an executive member of the Trinidad Labour Party.

31 Hugh Tinker, *Separate and Unequal: India and the Indians in the British Commonwealth 1920-1950*, (London; C. Hurst, 1976), pp. 162-63.



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disappeared.<sup>32</sup> By 1934 it was clear that Cipriani's constitutional politics could not win demands for workers. Consequently, they were prepared to take to the streets to dramatize their plight.

As the 1930's began, the Indian plantation labourer endured considerable suffering. By the mid-decade the price of sugar had fallen to the lowest level ever recorded. The wages of sugar workers, which had experienced a slight increase, dropped drastically by 1934. By contrast "the prices of foodgrains and other necessities had increased considerably so that sugar workers were reduced to a condition of poverty and even starvation."<sup>33</sup> In this situation social tension increased and by 1934 strikes and riots erupted in Trinidad.

The East Indian labour disturbances of 1934 were the first major industrial conflict to occur in Trinidad in the 1930's.<sup>34</sup> It involved some 15,000 estate workers who went on strike on all the sugar plantations in the counties of St. George and Caroni to protest against unemployment excessive task work; harsh working conditions; low wages; maltreatment of labourers; and managements' payment practices.<sup>35</sup> The strikes engaged the attention of the society throughout July during which time important developments and dimensions to the industrial conflict had taken place. Indian agricultural workers had attacked estate offices, had set fire to the homes and offices of estate managers, beaten policemen, looted dry goods stores at Charlie Village, Chaguanas, San Juan, Todd's Road and Freeport, disrupted communications by cutting telephone wires, beaten drivers and overseers on the Brechin Castle, Spring, Rivulet and Caroni estates and destroyed estate machinery.<sup>36</sup> Such actions had become necessary when all means had failed to solicit management's sympathetic attention to the

32 Malcolm Cross. "Colonialism and Ethnicity: a Theory and Comparative Case Study" *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, I (January, 1978), p. 46.

33 Tinker, *Separare and Unequal*, p. 163.

34 For a detailed account of the 1934 disturbances see Sahadeo Basdeo, "The 1934 East Indian Labour Disturbances in Trinidad: A Case Study in Colonial Labour Relations", (Paper read at the Conference on East Indians in the Caribbean: A Symposium on Contemporary Economic and Political Issues held at U.W.I. St. Augustine, June 25-28, 1975).

35 C.O. 295/585, Report of the Labour Disturbances Commission, 1934, p.10; See also *Port of Spain Gazette*, July 21 to 24, 1934; C.O. 295/585, Telegram, Grier to Cunliffe-Lister, July 27, 1934.

36 *Port of Spain Gazette*, July 18, 24-25, 27, 1934. See also C.O. 295/585, Report of the Labour Disturbances Commission, 1934, p. 8.



dire needs and problems of the estate workers. When the disturbances ended hundreds of arrests were made, heavy fines were imposed and hundreds of East Indian sugar workers were imprisoned.<sup>37</sup> In fact the number imprisoned at Chaguanas reached such proportions that "it was impossible to keep them in the station cells." They had to be transferred to the Royal Gaol.<sup>38</sup>

The 1934 disturbances made it clear that the Indian working class had now become a major force to be reckoned with; that they were at last shaking free from the grip of the plantocracy. Through the co-ordination of activities and unity of purpose which workers from the different sugar plantations displayed during the strike<sup>39</sup> it was apparent that they had come a long way from the days of indenture. For the first time in Trinidad signs of the potential capacity for solidarity of the Indian estate worker became evident. This was made possible by the removal of the isolation which the indenture system had enforced. Workers from different estates made use of the opportunity to meet and discuss common problems; they found it easier to co-operate and organise; it became easier for news of grievances to spread; and hence opportunity for a more determined, resolute and effective opposition to traditional management labour policies. It took only seventeen years after the termination of indenture for Indians to convincingly demonstrate that they had already developed a labour and socio-political awareness of their own.

But just as important, the 1934 disturbances reflected the frustration of the Indian working class with the T.W.A.'s constitutional approach to labour politics. For Cipriani and Roodal, who on a number of occasions attempted to pacify the workers now found their advice repudiated.<sup>40</sup> Though the Indian working class still held both men in considerable esteem, the workers' attitude reflected the changing mood of the time. It reflected the gradual emergence of a new perception among Indians of the socio-economic relationship in society between those who were considered "the hewers of wood and drawers of water" and the estate management elite. Such an analysis transcended racial consideration. Though the cultural, ethnic and political divide was still a

37 C.O. 295/585, Grier to Cunliffe-Lister, July 28, 1934. Enclosure Inspector General of Constabulary to Colonial Secretary, July 27, 1934.

38 *Port of Spain Gazette*, July 25, 1934.

39 Basdeo, "The 1934 East Indian Labour disturbances in Trinidad," p. 21.

40 *Ibid.*, p.38.



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predominant feature in the society, economic conditions precipitated by the depression had helped by the mid-1930's to stimulate the remarkable emergence of working class consciousness which succeeded in throwing a bridge across the ethnic divide.

The mid-1930's also witnessed the emergence of young Indians who were not prepared to tolerate the advocacy of Indian working class interests by middle-class Indian professionals or businessmen. Mitra G. Sinanan was one such example. A law student in London in the early 1930's, Sinanan was annoyed at the composition of the Commission of Enquiry appointed to investigate the disturbances of 1934.<sup>41</sup> He single-handedly protested its middle-class composition to the Colonial Office by denouncing the choice of Seereram Maharaj and S. Teelucksingh as representatives of Indian interests.<sup>42</sup> The nature of his concern was well minuted by S. M. Campbell of the West Indian Department in the Colonial Office.

A young Trinidad East Indian, Mr. M.G. Sinanan... Barrister at Law Middle Temple called yesterday at the library and asked to see Council Paper 109 in (T) and was given facilities: he later asked... to see all sorts of people including Sir John Maffey with whom he seemed to claim some acquaintance or "had met". He saw Mr. J. B. Williams, Mr. Rootham and later myself as he had seemed dissatisfied on the evidence point... I gather that Mr. Sinanan, who is very frank about being anti-Trinidad Government and a great democrat, was very cross over persons purporting to represent labour being parties to the findings of the Commission and he seemed to think that East Indians in particular were very badly served in the Commission's findings... He also complained of inadequate representation of Indian (working class) interests in Trinidad and hinted that the Indians represented in the Legislative Council were not representatives at all.<sup>43</sup>

On the last point Sinanan unquestionably had in mind Sarran Teelucksingh, a wealthy cinema owner and elected member for Caroni, and Timothy Roodal an Indian oil magnate and elected member for St. Patrick.

41 C.O. 295/585, Minute by S.M. Campbell, dated December 12, 1934.

42 *Ibid.*

43 *Ibid.*



But whereas Sinanan raised Indian working class issues outside the official ranks of the T.W.A. and in the metropolitan centre of the British Empire, it was Adrain Cola Rienzi, now based in Trinidad and a member of the T.W.A., who was able through his class analysis of society to bring Indian and black workers together. Indeed, capitalising upon the influence which Butler had exerted in bringing the racial barriers in the oilbelt, it was Rienzi the young Indian radical and intellectual, who became the new 'tribune of the people' during and immediately after the labour disturbances in 1937. It was Rienzi who was able to capture the imagination of the Indian and black worker and engender in them a sense of working class pride. Most important it was Rienzi who was able to wrest from the British Government the Labour legislative demands which Cipriani, Roodal and Butler had tolled so assiduously to achieve in the 1920's and early 1930's.

Rienzi (1906-1972) was born of Indian peasant parentage in South Trinidad as Krishna Deonarine and, after an incomplete secondary education at Naparima College, he worked as a solicitor's clerk in San Fernando for eight years.<sup>44</sup> During this time he developed an interest in politics and in 1924, at the age of 18, he became both President of the San Fernando branch of the T.W.A. and the Association's chief organizer for South Trinidad.<sup>45</sup> In 1925 his left wing political leanings first became apparent when he initiated correspondence with S. Saklatvala, Communist M. P. for Battersea in the United Kingdom, as a consequence of which he swung more to the left.<sup>46</sup> This became public in 1927 when, as President of the San Fernando branch of the T.W.A., he despatched a congratulatory cable to the Soviet Union on its tenth anniversary of "successful government" and in which he pledged the support of Trinidad workers in the "struggle for world socialism."<sup>47</sup> Unfortunately for him, the cable was intercepted by the Superintendent of the West India and Panama Telegraph Company and passed onto the Governor of Trinidad.<sup>48</sup> It was this cable which henceforth brought him under the close surveillance of the colonial government and subsequently the Colonial Office.<sup>49</sup> Between 1927 and 1930 he was

44. Six of these years were served at the office of Cyril Hobson. See A. Calder Marshall, *Glory Dead*, (London: Michael Joseph Ltd., 1939) pp. 229-30.

45. C.O. 295/563, Secret, Byatt to Amery, December 21, 1927.

46. Calder-Marshall, *Glory Dead*, pp. 229-30.

47. C.O. 295/563, Secret, Byatt to Amery, December 21, 1927.

48. *Ibid.*

49. *Ibid.*, The Governor wrote to the Colonial Office describing Rienzi as "of dishonest character and has shown signs of markedly seditious views. On one or



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closely associated with the short-lived Indian National Party,<sup>50</sup> and was an active member of the Trinidad E.I.N.C. for which he sought affiliation with the British Labour Party.<sup>51</sup>

Advised by Saklatvala, Rienzi left Trinidad for Trinity College, Dublin, in the later part of 1930<sup>52</sup> to study jurisprudence; but shortly thereafter was forced to leave for London because he had become an ardent sympathiser of the Sinn Fein Movement and "went around lecturing for the I.R.A."<sup>53</sup> Arriving at London in 1931, he entered Middle Temple where he graduated in 1934,<sup>54</sup> and during his stay there came under the direct personal influence of Saklatvala, whom he met for the first time. Here he also became associated with a number of radical causes in the United Kingdom, particularly the struggle for Indian independence. As Calder-Marshall has noted, Rienzi's association with Saklatvala was the high point in the former's intellectual life and it was in Saklatvala's company that the young Rienzi found not only "his ideas clarified" but also "his movements watched by the police."<sup>55</sup> On Rienzi's return to Trinidad in July 1934 he wrote to Cipriani of his willingness to work again with the T.W.A., and the Captain reluctantly accepted his offer. Cipriani was now highly suspicious of the left wing leanings which Rienzi had developed in England and, as one work has recently pointed out, the Captain did a great deal to discourage some of Rienzi's initiatives.<sup>56</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, that co-operation between both men in the Trinidad Labour Party (which had now replaced the T.W.A.) broke down. In 1935, Rienzi withdrew from the Party after the Captain accused him of being "a communist as well as a threat to his leadership."<sup>57</sup> Rienzi subsequently founded first, the Citizens

two occasions he has addressed letters to the press of a violently anti-British character ... though Deonarine has, so far, given no actual ground for action against him his violent opinions make it desirable to keep a watch on his activities."

50 C.O. 295/565, Confidential, Byatt to Amery, August 21, 1928.

51 C.O. 295/563, Secret, Byatt to Amery, December 21, 1937.

52 There is evidence that Rienzi was in Trinidad in the early part of 1930. See *Labour Leader*, January 4, 1930, when he attended a meeting of prominent East Indians to support the cause of Indian Independence.

53 Galder-Marshall, *Glory Dead*, p. 238.

54 *Middle Temple Admission Register*, Vol. III, p. 933.

55 Calder-Marshall, *op. cit.*, pp. 229-30.

56 Surjit Mansingh, "Background to failure of the West Indies Federation: An Inquiry into British Rule in the Carribean, 1920-1947, (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, The American University: New York, 1972), p. 168.

57 Ryan, *Race and Nationalism in Trinidad and Tobago*, p. 41.



Welfare League, and in late 1935, the Trinidad Citizens League (T.C.L.).<sup>58</sup> It was in the latter organisation however that Rienzi was to begin his climb to working class leadership in the 1930's for he understood only too well that by 1935—

the T.W.A. was clearly a spent force. Under the domination of Cipriani, its strategy of "constitutional agitation" and reliance on the British Labour Party to promote its causes in Britain had not produced any major positive result. No constitutional (or labour legislative) advance had been made in the decade under Cipriani's leadership, and the economic condition of the working classes had deteriorated steadily, provoking hunger marches and other forms of mass protest both in the rural and urban areas. Cipriani was aware that industrial unrest was imminent, but he could offer no solution to the working classes other than advise restraint and continued constitutional agitation.<sup>59</sup>

It was in the T.C.L. that Rienzi came into contact with such working class radicals as T.U.B. Butler and J. F. Rojas and soon channelled the energy of the Indian and black working classes away from Cipriani's leadership. By mid-1936, the T.C.L., a southern based organisation confining its activities to San Fernando and the oil belt had become the main political rival of the T.L.P., and this, despite the fact that the League was not a political party. As Rienzi, its Chairman, stated:

The Trinidad Citizens League has not been formed for the purpose of rivalling any political organisation, neither has it been formed for the purpose of advocating anything along purely party lines. In Trinidad what had been for a long time a crying need was some platform upon which persons of various shades of political opinion could join together without compromising particular creeds with a view to advocating for those things which would better Trinidad by opposing those

<sup>58</sup> Calder-Marshall, *op.cit.*, p. 2222.

<sup>59</sup> Kelvin Singh, "Adrian Cola Rienzi and the Labour Movement in Trinidad (1925-1944)," (Paper read at the Eleventh Conference of Caribbean Historians, University of the Netherland Antilles, Curacao, April 1979), p. 9.



things which were detrimental to the interests of the colony.<sup>60</sup>

It was because of the T.C.L. ineffectiveness as a political party that Butler left the League and by September 1936 formed his own British Empire Workers and Citizens Home Rule Party (B.E.W. & C.H.R.P.).<sup>61</sup> Indeed it was the Butler Party which by October 1936 had become the major opposition to the T.L.P. which, shortly afterwards, won the confidence not only of oil workers, but those in other occupations as well.

Rienzi was not long to remain in the background. The consequences of the labour unrest in 1937 made it necessary for the young radical to play his role. On June 19, 1937, when the famous oil fields labour riots erupted in Fyzabad, Butler found it expedient to escape into hiding leaving his followers without any sense of direction. More important, the fact that a general strike had engulfed the colony within two days after the Fyzabad riots made it critical for someone of recognised stature to take over the leadership of the workers. Through strike action workers in all sectors of the economy had brought the country to a standstill. East Indian workers in the sugar plantations and cocoa estates downed tools; so had government employees in the Public Works Department and the Trinidad Government Railways, domestic servants, coconut labourers, store clerks, waterfront workers, lightermen and most important all workers employed in the oilfields.<sup>62</sup> "At its height, seventeen categories of workers in seventy-two areas of Trinidad had gone on strike,<sup>63</sup> and Trinidad was in the throes of general strike "which assumed a proportion previously unknown in the history of labour agitation" in the colony.<sup>64</sup> As the *Port of Spain Gazette* noted, "the nearest approach of its kind" was the Stevedores Strike of 1919 and the "Labour (Estates) Disturbances of July 1934."<sup>65</sup> It was important for leadership to emerge in order to co-ordinate labour activities and to articulate labour demands.

60 *Port of Spain Gazette*, December 21, 1935.

61 See Butler's evidence before the Foster Commission in *Port of Spain Gazette*, October 7, 1937.

62 *Ibid.*

63 W. Richard Jacobs, "The Politics of Protest in Trinidad- The Strikes and Disturbances of 1937", (Unpublished Paper read at the 5th Conference of Caribbean Historians, held at U.W.I., St. Augustine, April 1973), p. 26.

64 Editorial, *Port of Spain Gazette*, June 22, 1937.

65 *Ibid.*



Butler had no doubt as to his choice for leadership in his absence. Away from public contact he managed to communicate with Rienzi soliciting the latter's legal services in defence against criminal charges laid by the police in connection with incidents arising out of the Fyzabad disturbances and delegating him the responsibility of negotiating a settlement for oil workers.<sup>66</sup>

It was in this context that Rienzi arose to take up the work left unfinished by Butler. As Butler's "accredited emissary",<sup>67</sup> because of his non-racial attitude which stemmed from his class analysis of society, and because of his competence as a lawyer, Rienzi was heartily received by the predominantly black oil workers and more predictably by the predominantly Indian sugar workers. But equally important were Rienzi's characteristics, so well described by Dr. Vincent Toothill in 1939:

On top of the tide of the new political era is Adrain Rienzi. Rienzi has all on his side — youth education, culture, ability and a very considerable personality. Rienzi is an Indian, but has lost the narrow outlook of ... race and has a big enough brain to see that no one race will be all-powerful in Trinidad, in fact he stands for the breaking down of racial and national prejudices.<sup>68</sup>

It is indeed remarkable that Rienzi, in the midst of June disturbances, had emerged as the first Indian leader in the history of the colony to win the overwhelming support of East Indian workers from the sugar industry. In the context of Trinidad's labour history this was a significant achievement.

The progress of events in 1937 had made it clear to Rienzi that it was important to minimize the ineffectiveness of the bargaining power of the working class particularly when their demands were not always

<sup>66</sup> *Port of Spain Gazette*, June 27, 1937. See also Basdeo, "Labour Organisation and Labour Reform", pp. 276-77.

<sup>67</sup> C.O. 295/599, Fletcher to Ormsby-Gore, July 5, 1937; See also *Trinidad Guardian*, June 27, 1937; *Trinidad and Tobago Labour Disturbances 1937*; Report of the Commission, (London; H.M.S.O., 1938), p. 67.

<sup>68</sup> Vincent Toothill, *Doctor's Office* (London: Blackie and Son., Ltd., 1939), pp. 285-86.



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uniform or coherent and when some groups were willing to accept certain agreements which others had rejected.<sup>69</sup> The need for institutionalised trade union solidarity had become important. Even Colonial Office and Trinidad government officials had now come to recognise this fact.<sup>70</sup> It is in this context that the 1937 strikes spurred on the development of Trinidad's best known trade unions and undoubtedly the single most important figure in the story of their origin is the East Indian Adrian Cola Rienzi.<sup>71</sup> He was founder and president of the Oilfield Workers' Trade Union (registered 15th September 1937) the All Trinidad Sugar Estates and Factory Workers Trade Union (registered 24 November 1937) and was instrumental in the formation of the Federated Workers Trade Union.<sup>72</sup> The work which Rienzi had initiated in Trinidad had begun to influence the other British Caribbean territories. For as the Grenada *West Indian* was quick to point out:

Trinidad is without doubt best suited for initiating the movement, and eyes everywhere will be turned towards that colony, and the hope cherished that those men who have undertaken the serious responsibility will go about their task with caution and courage and lay foundations which will support a solid and imposing structure.<sup>73</sup>

The outstanding feature of the trade unions formed in 1937, as it is true today, was the fact that its membership was drawn from different races. In June 1937 for the first time there was a united stand of working people against the poor wages and conditions of the international oil companies and sugar estates. Such solidarity continued as the 1930's closed. Working class demonstrations came out overwhelmingly in support of Rienzi in the Legislative Council in 1938. It was the first time in the history of Trinidad that a trade union leader was elected to the Colonial

<sup>69</sup> Jacobs, "The Politics of Protest in Trinidad - the Strikes and Disturbances of 1937", pp. 31-36.

<sup>70</sup> C.O. 295/599, Fletcher to Ormsby-Gore, June 28, 1937: See also Basdeo, "Labour Organisation and Labour Reform", pp. 280-81.

<sup>71</sup> Singh, "Adrian Cola Rienzi and Labour Movement in Trinidad", pp. 11-22.

<sup>72</sup> Calder-Marshall, *Glory Dead*, pp. 233-35. It is important to note that both the sugar and oil workers unions were formed in July but did not get registered until later.

<sup>73</sup> Editorial, *West Indian*, November 9, 1937, in *Port of Spain Gazette*, November 18, 1937.



Legislature. In January 1938, he had organised a massive demonstration in San Fernando at which the presence of 8,000 oil-workers, 5,000 sugar-workers and 2,000 cane farmers was claimed.<sup>74</sup> Again in June 1939, an estimated crowd of 25,000 strong was reported to have commemorated the revolt two years before:

Men and women and children of the Afro and Indo West-Indian races mixed together as never before reminding one of the Afro-Indian unity which was born as a result of the struggles and sacrifices of these two down trodden races during the General Strike in June 1937.<sup>75</sup>

Even *The People*, a pro-African paper which was inclined to an unsympathetic view of the predominantly Indian sugar workers came out in 1937 in support of Rienzi's leadership and Afro-Indian solidarity.<sup>76</sup> Similarly, the Sanatan Dharma Board of Control, the official Hindu religious body, supported the general view when testifying to the Moyne Commission:

We wish to emphasize that no racial prejudice or rivalry exists in Trinidad between the masses of the East and West Indians who live and labour in reasonable harmony.<sup>77</sup>

Such a questionable statement no doubt reflected the mood of the society in 1937-1938.

Rienzi's climb to prominence co-incided with the period when the British Government had been forced by the colonial disturbances in the Caribbean and Africa to promote labour organisations and labour reform as a matter of urgent colonial policy. What the Colonial Office had misgivings about was the capability of local labour leadership to assist in implementing reform measures. This problem did not arise in Trinidad where, unlike the oil and sugar magnates in the colony, the Imperial Government, the British Labour Party and the British Trades Union Congress shared considerable faith in Rienzi's temperament and

<sup>74</sup> *The People*, January 22, 1938.

<sup>75</sup> *The People*, June 24, 1939.

<sup>76</sup> See for example *The People*, July 28, 1934; March 10, 1957, October 30, 1937.

<sup>77</sup> C.O. 950/777, Memorandum of the Sanatan Dharma Board of Control to the Moyne Commission.



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ability to proceed constitutionally with instituting change. An official in the Colonial Office summed up the situation well.

Leaseholds . . . wants the Governor to refuse to recognise the union which is being formed by Rienzi: (a) because they don't believe that the workers are capable of trade union organization; (b) because Rienzi is a bad hate. The answer seems to be that (a) you don't know until you've tried and it is the Governor's policy, which on general grounds the S of S must strongly support, to encourage the formation of trade unions (b) the only people who are capable of doing this are the very people who have been known as "red" in the past, and you've got to put up with them and hope they'll get paler. Further it is clear that the Governor is finding Rienzi useful as a negotiator.<sup>78</sup>

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary, the Marquess of Dufferin and Ava, who supported the formation of trade unions in Trinidad wrote that:

I see nothing in Rienzi's records to make us suppose he is an unsuitable person as a T.U. leader. Anyone who makes a nuisance of (himself) is called a communist nowadays and one cannot start a T.U. movement in a place like this without being a nuisance to somebody.<sup>79</sup>

Further support for Rienzi came from Sir John Shuckburg, Permanent Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office. The latter considered Rienzi one of the "many persons of Indian origin of high standing in these colonies . . . who . . . has built up from nothing the two Trade Unions in the oil and sugar industries."<sup>80</sup> Top British Labour officials like Walter Citrine, Arthur Creech-Jones, Stafford Cripps, Arthur Prigh, Dudley Collard and John Jagger also had nothing but laudatory comments to make about Rienzi's contribution to trade union development.

Against this background of support it is not surprising that Rienzi was able with his small core of men including John Rojas, E.R. Blades,

<sup>78</sup> C.O. 295/601, Minute by Beckett, dated July 31, 1937.

<sup>79</sup> C.O. 295/599, Minute by Marquess of Dufferin and Ava, dated August 3, 1937.

<sup>80</sup> C.O. 318/433, Shuckburgh to Stewart, September 2, 1938.



MacDonald Moses and Ralph Mentor to form the Trinidad and Tobago Trades Union Council;<sup>81</sup> was influential in the formation of The British Guiana and West Indies Labour Congress;<sup>82</sup> and as a member of the Legislative Council participated in drafting and refining such legislation as the Trade Disputes (Arbitration and Enquiry) Law, the Recruiting of Workers Ordinance, the Masters and Servants Law, and the revision of the 1932 Trade Union Ordinance permitting the inclusion of the rights of peaceful picketing and immunity against action in tort.<sup>83</sup> Most important he was able to negotiate successful industrial agreements for oil and sugar workers. By mid-1939 Rienzi had already established his place in Trinidadian labour history.

The period 1919 to 1939 therefore saw the slow but steady rise of Indians in the politics of labour reform in Trinidad. From the strikes of 1919 through the Labour Estate Disturbances of 1934 to the riots of 1937, East Indian workers had developed a steadily growing labour-political consciousness which reached its height in the formation of the first legal working class combination in 1937 with a predominance of Indians—The All Trinidad Sugar Estates and Factory Workers Trade Union. This was indeed testimony to the progress which the Indian working class had made since the end of indenture.

Equally important during this period was the fact that the Indian and black working classes were able to appreciate the identical nature of their labour legislative demands. And for this reason it became avowedly wise and politic to co-operate in their attempt to win progressive labour demands. It is indeed noteworthy that whereas Indians to a large extent advocated political and constitutional reform within the fold of ethnic-based organisations such as the E.I.N.A. and the E.I.N.C. during this period, they sought labour demands together with black workers first within the fold of the T.W.A. and later the trade union movement. It was this inter-racial co-operation, working class unity and solidarity and the direction provided by the leadership of Cipriani, Butler and later Rienzi that was responsible for the progress of the Indian and the black working classes after 1937.

81 Basdeo, "Labour Organisation and Labour Reform", p. 333.

82 *Ibid.*, pp. 323-24.

83 *Ibid.*, p. 317.



## **Towards an Indian Dominion: Lord Zetland and the Indian Constitutional Problem, 1939-40**

BY

PETER HILL

### **I**

The Indian constitutional problem arose immediately Edwin Montagu made his momentous announcement in August 1917. Briefly put, it involved the formulation of a system of government which satisfied, as far as practicable, the varied interests of the main sections of Indian opinion as well as the essential interests of Great Britain, and which was capable of advancing India to the status of a united self-governing dominion. It thus raised the questions of how and when British responsibility for the government of India was to be transferred to Indian hands. In the constitutional measures enacted in 1919 and 1935, British policy makers placed their faith for an answer to the first question in a hybrid cross between parliamentary institutions and federalism. The answer to the second question was left indefinite, but it was anticipated that the process would be necessarily lengthy. However, with the outbreak of the second world war, it soon became evident that the course of British constitutional policy pursued since 1917 was threatened with collapse. The whole question of the pace and direction of Indian constitutional development was again thrown open.

This article examines the efforts of the then Conservative Secretary of State for India, Lord Zetland,<sup>1</sup> to meet the rapidly changing situation with what, when compared to existing policy, amounted to a very much

<sup>1</sup> Zetland, 2nd Marquess of (Lawrence John Lumley Dundas); Governor of Bengal, 1917-39; member of the Conservative Party delegation to the Round Table Conferences, 1930-32; member of the Joint Select Committee on Indian constitutional reform, 1933-34; official biographer of Lord Curzon; author of a number of books on his experiences and travels in India and the Orient; Secretary of State for India, 1935-40.



more forward solution to the Indian constitutional problem along true dominion status lines. In the process, the article has two particular purposes. Firstly, it seeks to show that, despite opinion to the contrary,<sup>2</sup> at least some Conservatives in high places did have a systematically thought out India policy; the Conservative approach to India was not just the Churchillian charge. Admittedly the policies and efforts of Zetland (and, indeed, those of his Conservative successor Amery)<sup>3</sup> came to nought but they should not be ignored for this reason. Secondly, the article puts renewed emphasis on the complexities of the constitutional problems by this stage. It has become popular to suggest that what was needed in the early stages of the war was some far-sighted and imaginative initiative by the imperial power to bring the disputing leaders of the Congress and the Muslim League into a war-time government in the expectation that the practical experience of so working together would prepare the way for post-war agreement on the heads of a free and united India.<sup>4</sup> This article seeks to throw doubt on the foregoing supposition through its exploration of Lord Zetland's efforts to provide such an initiative and the obstacles in the way of success. The constraints — not the freedoms — of the situation are what impress.

## II

Political events during the first three months of the war moved with a rapidity not initially expected by the British authorities. By the end of November, in exchange for its co-operation with the Government

2 For instance, R. J. Moore in *Churchill, Cripps and India, 1939-45*, (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1979) reduces the Conservative-Labour division over India policy to a struggle between Winston Churchill and Sir Stafford Cripps. Cripps is supported by the Labour Party and Churchill by the Conservatives, but they come across as 'faceless' seconds to the main protagonists.

3 See Peter Hill "L. S. Amery, India and the Commonwealth: 1940-42," in *Journal of Indian History*, LVII (August-December, 1979).

4 See in particular, writings of R. J. Moore: "British Policy and the Indian Problem, 1936-40", *The Partition of India, Policies and Perspectives, 1935-47*, eds. C.H. Philips and M.D. Wainwright (London, Allen and Unwin, 1970) pp. 79-94, and "The Stopgap Viceroy", *South Asian Review*, VII, no. 1. (October 1973), pp. 55-57, and *Churchill, Cripps and India ... op.cit.*



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and support in the war effort, the Congress demanded: that the declaration be made by the British Government of its war aims, to include a recognition of the freedom and independence of India, and an acknowledgement of the right of India and her peoples (including the State's people) to determine their own constitution through the instrument of a sovereign constituent assembly; that such an assembly be elected on the widest possible suffrage, separate electorates being retained for those minorities that desired them but no weightage being given for communities and interests; that this assembly be allowed to frame a constitution in which the rights of all "accepted minorities" would be "protected to their satisfaction", with disputed matters being referred to arbitration: that the British Government enable the machinery for a constituent assembly to be put in motion immediately after the war; and that in the meantime the British Government associate Indians responsibly with the conduct of the war.<sup>5</sup>

On the other hand, by November 1939, the Muslim League had assumed a position comprising a demand for: recognition as the only authoritative and representative organisation of the Muslims in India; the full safe-guarding of the Muslim position in the Congress dominated provinces; the reconsideration of the entire problem of India's future constitution, as soon as circumstances permitted; and a claim that the prior consent of the Muslim community should be a prerequisite to any further constitutional advance.<sup>6</sup> To this list Jinnah, the Muslim League president, had also added an emphatic repudiation of the Congress plan for a constituent assembly.<sup>7</sup> However, the Muslim League stand at this stage was essentially negative in that, unlike the Congress with its call for independence and a constituent assembly, it had not definitely committed itself to any particular solution for India's constitutional future; but there can be no doubt that its ideas about a constitutional heaven differed very greatly to those of the Congress. In particular, the years from 1937 to to 1939 had seen a new and disturbing growth of separatist forces within the Indian body politic; these years witnessed

<sup>5</sup> For the development of the Congress position, See *Indian Annual Register* (Calcutta), 1939, II, pp. 226-8, 231, 236-9.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 351-3; and Jinnah to Linlithgow, 5 November 1939, in Marquess of Linlithgow, *Speeches and Statements 1936-43* (New Delhi, Bureau of Public Information, Government of India, 1945), pp. 397-8.

<sup>7</sup> Reuter telegram (copy), 10 December 1939, in Public and Judicial Department Papers (hereafter cited as L/P & J/8), Vol. 506a: ff. 27-32, India Office Records, London.



a definite hardening of Muslim views towards not just the all-India federation embodied in the 1935 Act but towards any form of all-India government.<sup>8</sup>

The British Government had responded to the demands of the Indian parties by means of a viceregal declaration on 17 October which, when boiled down, consisted of nothing more than a reassertion that dominion status was the goal of British policy; an offer to re-examine the whole of the Act of 1935 after the war in consultation with representative Indians; and an offer to establish a consultative committee to be kept informed about the prosecution of the war.<sup>9</sup> This declaration, largely a result of the Viceroy's<sup>10</sup> drafting hand, was based upon the assumption that their aim should be to remain as uncommitted as possible towards India's constitutional position.<sup>11</sup> The declaration proved unacceptable to both the Congress and the Muslim League. While this had been expected, both Linlithgow and Zetland were caught by surprise at the strength of the condemnation, particularly from the

8 See R. J. Moore, *The Crisis of Indian Unity, 1917-40* (Oxford, O.U.P., 1975) pp. 305-12; and P. Hardy, *The Muslims of British India* (Cambridge, C.U.P. 1972), pp. 222-30. By the middle of 1938 important Congress leaders were privately expressing their concern at the growing alienation of the Muslims. For instance, in July 1939 Nehru wrote: "It is true that in spite of our efforts, the situation has deteriorated and it may be said that there is more general illwill among the Muslim masses towards the Congress than there has been at any time in the past ... there is no doubt that we have been unable to check the growth of communalism and anti-Congress feelings among the Muslim masses." Nehru to Prasad, 7 July 1939, 3-C/39, Prasad Collection, Microfilm copy, University of Queensland. See also Prasad to Patel, 11 October 1938, and Patel to Prasad, 15 October 1938, 4-A/38, Prasad Collection.

9 *Indian Annual Register*, 1939, II, pp. 384-9.

10 Linlithgow, 2nd Marquess of (Victor John Alexander Hope); Chairman of the Royal Commission on Agriculture in India, 1926-26; Chairman of the Joint Select Committee on Indian constitutional reform, 1933-34; Viceroy and Governor General of India, 1936-43.

11 Linlithgow to Zetland, 21 September 1939 (telegram), Linlithgow Collection (hereafter L.C.), Vol. 18, MSS Eur. F125, India Office Library, London; and Linlithgow to Zetland, 25 September 1939, Zetland Collection (hereafter Z.C.), Vol. 18, MSS Eur. D609, microfilm copy, University of Queensland.



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more moderate sections of the Congress and moderate Hindu opinion in general.<sup>12</sup>

It was the developing political deadlock which led Zetland to reflect on the implications which the outbreak of war might hold for Indian constitutional development. On 23 October, in the process, of recommending a request from the Viceroy for a further initiative to bring the Indian leaders together,<sup>13</sup> Zetland circulated for the consideration of his colleagues what was to be the first of a number of reasoned and perceptive memorandums. Zetland wrote that when Parliament accepted dominion status as the goal for India, it was generally assumed that the journey would be a long one; however, the effect of the war had been to bring them hard up against the implications of dominion status for India, in view of the demands made by the Congress. Therefore, Zetland warned, they found themselves "on the horns of an uncomfortable dilemma, for there is no course open to us which is not necessarily attended by grave disadvantages"; either they had to go a great deal further than they had hitherto felt able to do towards satisfying the Congress claims, or, alternatively, take over government in the Congress dominated provinces in the face of Congress opposition.

The consequences of adopting the second alternative would most probably be that they would find themselves faced with a steadily increasing volume of agitation, culminating in strikes, attempts at sabotage, and civil disobedience. Such a situation would place immense strain on the civil services; troops would be needed from time to time to suppress lawlessness; and bitterness would steadily grow. This, in turn, would have an adverse effect in neutral countries, particularly in the United States, and would be of very considerable propaganda value for their enemies. As for the other alternative, the Congress had rejected the Government's latest offer as worthless, and in its place demanded an effective share in the central government and

12 Linlithgow to Zetland, 22 October 1939, Z.C. 18; and Zetland to Linlithgow, 26 October 1939, Z.C. 11.

13 The Viceroy was now prepared to offer an expansion of his Executive Council, but on condition that the Congress and the Muslim League reached a *modus vivendi* at the provincial level as the prerequisite for harmonious co-operation at the centre. The Congress subsequently refused to consider the offer until they received satisfaction over Britain's post-war intentions. With this further breakdown all the provincial Congress ministries were ordered by the Congress Working Committee to lay down office.



a promise of freedom for Indians to devise their own constitution without external interference at the end of the war. Therefore, if it was thought that they must at all costs endeavour to avoid a serious break with the Congress, the question was how far they could contemplate going in this direction.<sup>14</sup>

In the ensuing War Cabinet discussion only the Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, gave any real consideration to the wider question of how far they should go towards meeting the demands of the Congress on the post-war situation. However, it was clear that the War Cabinet accepted Chamberlain's view that nothing had happened to justify the Congress demand for freedom for Indians to devise their own constitution, and the Viceroy was enjoined to inform the principal Indian leaders to this effect.<sup>15</sup>

In this memorandum Zetland had merely stated the alternatives without definitely indicating his own preference. Within a matter of weeks, however, Zetland had definitely come out in favour of the second alternative.

The reason in part was Zetland's wish to avoid, if possible, a fight with Congress during a time of world emergency. Zetland's Conversion was also facilitated by the fact that he accepted by the beginning of November and that the federal scheme of the 1935 Act was dead, thus leaving Britain without a workable long-term policy. The fatal blow to federation, in his opinion, had been delivered in the end not so much by the Princes as by the attitude of the British Indian parties, and more particularly the Muslim League.<sup>16</sup> But the major reason was Zetland's forboding that the effect of a long war on public opinion, both in Britain and abroad, would be such that the continuance of the British Raj in its existing state would not be possible. In particular, he was impressed by a tendency which he discerned amongst sections of the

<sup>14</sup> War Cabinet Papers, CAB 67/2, W. P. (G) (39) 53, 23 October, 1939, Public Records Office, London.

<sup>15</sup> War Cabinet Minutes, CAB 65/1, W.M. 59 and 60 (39), 25 October, 1939, Public Records Office, London.

<sup>16</sup> CAB 65/2, W. M. 70 (39), 4 November, 1939.



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Conservative Party to take the view that a solution to the Indian problem should be found before the situation deteriorated much further.<sup>17</sup>

It was with Zetland's mind in this fluid and receptive state that into "the cross currents of the situation sailed Sir Stafford Cripps with the outline of a full-blown scheme for solving the Indian problem."<sup>18</sup>

Cripps, following on the outbreak of the war, had determined on a purely private and unofficial journey to India, Russia and China for discussions with political leaders in those countries.<sup>19</sup> In preparation for his visit to India, Cripps had worked out in detail a plan for a constituent assembly to frame an all-India constitution which he proposed to put to Indian leaders as a starting point in an endeavour to obtain broad acceptance for something along these lines. If substantial agreement could be achieved, Cripps hoped that the Government would then consent to the setting up of such a body and accept any constitution agreed upon. Cripps also proposed that Britain's special responsibilities and obligations in India — such as defence, the safeguarding of the rights of minorities, conditions of trade between Britain and India and other matters which might be at issue between Britain and India — should be dealt with during a transitional period of say fifteen years by means of a treaty.<sup>20</sup>

Cripps originally communicated his ideas to Zetland on 22 November, and Zetland, in a private letter to the Viceroy on the same day indicated that he was not unimpressed by Cripps's general ideas.<sup>21</sup> On 28 November Cripps came to see Zetland personally just prior to his departure for India. Zetland emphasised to Cripps that he and the Government remained entirely uncommitted towards such a scheme; however, privately Zetland was now definitely attracted by the general approach, though he remained, as he made clear to Cripps, sceptical as

17 Zetland first recorded this tendency in a letter to the Viceroy on 5 November. Speaking of the likely attitude of the Opposition towards India, Zetland added: "there is in addition a feeling amongst some of our own people that it ought to be possible to do something to prevent the situation from deteriorating further." Zetland to Linlithgow, 5 November, 1939, Z.C. 11.

18 Marquess of Zetland, *Essayez*, (London, Murray, 1956), p. 274.

19 For the rationale behind the journey, see C. Cooke, *The Life of Richard Stafford Cripps* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1957), p. 252.

20 See the note by Sir Stafford Cripps appended to Zetland to Linlithgow, 29 November, 1939, Z.C. 11.

21 Zetland to Linlithgow, 22 November, 1939, Z.C. 11.



to the chances of success. On the following day, in informing the Viceroy of this interview, Zetland wrote:

As you know, my mind has for some little time past been moving rather in the direction of an attempt by Indians to settle these difficult questions, and particularly the question of the minorities, themselves if they can, and I am rather attracted by the idea of putting the professions of the Congress to the test by telling them to go ahead with their Constituent Assembly; and in spite of the not very happy precedent of Ireland it does not occur to me that it might be possible to solve some of the outstanding questions which will have to be solved if India is indeed to acquire Dominion Status by means of a Treaty.

Zetland added that he proposed writing to the Prime Minister for a private and informal talk "on the whole question of translating our promises about Dominion Status into action."<sup>22</sup>

In his letter to Chamberlain on 1 December, Zetland set out his doubts on the Indian situation. He explained that while the situation in India gave no cause for immediate alarm or anxiety, they could not depend on the lull lasting indefinitely:

and in any case — whatever may happen in the near future — I do not believe that we shall find it possible at the end of the war to pick up the threads where we have dropped them and carry on as if nothing had happened. War on the grand scale seems to be accompanied by a churning of the ocean of thought . . . in the case of peoples, progress seems to proceed not smoothly but by jumps; and I do not believe that the picture of India moving towards the goal which we have set before her by smooth, measured and leisurely stages — which is what we have hitherto had in mind — is likely to be realised.

After explaining Cripps's ideas and proposed trip, Zetland expressed the view that if Cripps was by any means successful, the Government could not ignore the consequences; after all, they had maintained that the chief obstacle in the way of India reaching her goal lay in her own internal

22 Zetland to Linlithgow, 29 November, 1939, Z.C. 11.



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differences, so they would "find it very difficult on moral grounds alone" to resist a united demand for a constituent assembly to devise India's future form of government provided for by treaty. But, quite apart from the possible outcome of Cripps's initiative, Zetland counselled that there were certain definite attractions in placing the responsibility for constitution making on Indians themselves;

In the first place I doubt very much if a sufficient measure of agreement would be found among the communities to make a Constituent Assembly possible. If this were in fact so it would be made abundantly clear to the world that it was India herself who was not yet ready to receive, and not the British Government who were refusing to give, the freedom which her spokesmen claimed. On the other hand, supposing that a Constituent Assembly could be formed with the agreement of all parties, then those who find criticism of our efforts to create an united India under a free constitution so easy would, for the first time be compelled to come down to earth and face the hard facts of the case. The devising of a constitution which would be acceptable to all would constitute a second and far more formidable fence even than that provided by the formation of a Constituent Assembly; and I confess that I should derive real satisfaction from the spectacle which would be likely to be provided by the efforts of the Constitution makers to surmount it.<sup>23</sup>

Zetland saw the Prime Minister privately on 4 December and by the end of the conversation Zetland found him "quite ready to consider favourably what not so long ago would have been regarded as a revolutionary proposal."<sup>24</sup>

On 6 December, Zetland sat down to apprise Linlithgow in detail of his ideas and of his discussion with the Prime Minister. Zetland admitted the difficulties involved in such a course, and in particular, the Muslims could be expected to make known in no uncertain terms that they were being put in a highly embarrassing position for a completely uncooperative stand on their part would leave them open to the charge that they alone were standing in the way of India's constitutional

<sup>23</sup> Zetland to Chamberlain, 1 December 1939, appended to Zetland to Linlithgow, 6 December, 1939, Z.C. 11.

<sup>24</sup> Zetland to Linlithgow, 6 December, 1939, Z. C. 11.



progress. But this, Zetland wrote, would raise the question, "are we to admit that we are prepared to acquiesce in a state of affairs in which the Muslims are to stand for all time in the way of India acquiring the status of a Dominion? It is indeed a baffling problem."<sup>25</sup>

Zetland enclosed for the Viceroy's consideration a rough draft of declaration embodying the type of approach he proposed they should adopt. The crux of this draft was an admission that Indians be allowed to frame, at the end of the war, their own constitution for an Indian dominion by means of a constituent assembly or some such all-India body of this nature. However, this admission was subject to certain conditions. First, the composition of such a body and the method by which it would reach its conclusions must be agreed to by discussion between the accepted leaders of all the parties in India which would be concerned in good government under an Indian Dominion". By "accepted leaders", Zetland made it clear, he meant the representatives of the Hindu and Muslim communities. And secondly, that those matters in which Britain had either established obligations or a continuing interest be secured by means of a convention or treaty of specified duration which could be concluded between the British Government and the new government of India.<sup>26</sup> These obligations and interests included: the effective protection of minorities, for a transitional period at any rate; protection of those Indian States which did not join the new Indian union; India's defence; the Indian sterling debt; protection of the rights of members of the Indian Civil Service; and protection of British capital invested in India.<sup>27</sup> Zetland also added that in his view there was everything to be gained by assisting

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Zetland explained his intentions on the matter of a treaty by reference to the Irish precedent of 1922. In that instance, "Articles of Agreement for a Treaty" were agreed upon between representatives of the U.K. and Southern Ireland. The Irish Dail in enacting Eire's constitution should be construed by reference to the treaty which was scheduled to the Constituent Act. and further provided that "if any provision of the said Constitution or any amendment thereof or of any law made thereunder is in any respect repugnant to any of the provisions of the Scheduled Treaty, it shall to the extent only of such repugnancy be absolutely void and imperative and the Parliament and the Executive Council of the Irish Free State shall respectively pass such further legislation and do all such other things as may be necessary to implement the Scheduled Treaty." Zetland also pointed out that the only ultimate sanction behind any such treaty was some form of duress. See "Explanatory Note" appended to *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Draft declaration appended to *Ibid.*



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any attempt by Indians to set up the machinery for arriving at agreement.<sup>28</sup>

However, in the meantime the Viceroy had been drawing very different conclusions from the events which followed on the outbreak of the war. Broadly speaking Linlithgow's policy, throughout the war years of his viceroyalty, was governed by four main considerations; first, they should leave their hands as uncommitted as possible in the constitutional field; second, they should do nothing in the constitutional field which was not likely to be acceptable to the main elements concerned, third they should do nothing which was liable to endanger the continued support to those elements which were already supporting the Government, in particular the Muslims and the Princes; and fourth, they should do nothing which would in any way impinge on India's war effort.<sup>29</sup>

While it is not unduly difficult to indicate that Linlithgow's policy was at least partly governed by the value he placed on India's importance to Britain's position in the world,<sup>30</sup> and the need to keep India in the Empire,<sup>31</sup> if Linlithgow's approach to the constitutional problem is to be fully accounted for, consideration must also be given to other factors; and in particular to the difficulties which Linlithgow, in common with British officialdom, believed the nature of Indian society presented to constitutional development. Put briefly, Linlithgow believed that the

29 See, for instance, Linlithgow to Zetland, 21 September 1939 (t/g), L.C. 18; Linlithgow to Zetland, 28 November 1939, L.C. 13; Linlithgow to Zetland, 21 December 1939, Z.C. 18; and Linlithgow to Zetland, 8 March 1940 (t/g), L.C. 28.

30 See Linlithgow to Zetland, 21 December 1939, Z.C. 18; Linlithgow to Amery, 2 January 1943 (t/g), in N. Mansergh and E.W.R. Lumby (eds.), *The Transfer of Power 1942-7*, Vol. IV; *The Bengal Famine and the New Viceroyalty*, 15 June 1943-31 August 1944 (London, H.M.S.O., 1973) pp. 444, 447. Possibly Linlithgow best stated his estimate of the value of the Indian connection in December 1946 when it was accepted that the end of the Raj was near. See *Lords' Debates*, Vol. 144, cols. 958-9, 16 December 1946.

31 Linlithgow, it merits note, seems to have been consistently sceptical about the possibility of an Indian Dominion reconciled as its own free will to membership of the Empire of Commonwealth. See Linlithgow to Irwin, 5 November 1928, Halifax Collection, Vol. 18, MSS Eur. C.152, India Office Library, London; Linlithgow to Amery, 21 January 1942 (t/g), in N. Mansergh and F.W.R. Lumby (eds.), *The Transfer of Power 1942-47*, Vol. I, *The Cripps Mission, January April 1942* (London, H.M.S.O., 1970), p. 49; and Linlithgow's marginal note in Amery to Linlithgow, 24 August 1942, in N. Mansergh and E.W.R. Lumby (eds.), *The Transfer of Power 1942-47*, Vol. II, *Quit India 30 April 21 September 1942* (London, H. M. S. O., 1971).



divisions between Hindu and Muslim, and between British and Princely India were fundamental features of the Indian political scene which could not be ignored; that peaceful and ordered constitutional progress in India was only possible on the basis of agreement; that all talk of leaving Indians to agree on their own constitution was fallacious; that the only chance of constitutional advance was therefore to try and get Indians to compromise on some solution put forward by the British Government; and that such a solution would require the retention by Britain of the ultimate responsibility for the Government of India, until at some future date the divisions which threatened to rend asunder the political unity which British conquest had imposed on the Indian sub-continent were removed or modified.<sup>32</sup> And throughout this period Linlithgow continued to believe, almost tenaciously, that the constitution embodied in the 1935 Act represented the best compromise solution, based on democratic principles, to the Indian constitutional problem.<sup>33</sup>

However, what most impressed Linlithgow about the Indian political scene in the first three months of the war was the declining communal situation — the full extent of which he admitted he had not previously appreciated<sup>34</sup> — and the increasing resistance shown by the Muslim minority to the idea of rule by the majority Hindu community. By the end of November 1939 Linlithgow recognised that this could well necessitate the promulgation after the war of an entirely new solution. But Linlithgow also believed that this would require the admission that the preceding quarter of a century of constitutional development had merely led to a dead-end; that any solution based on democratic principles was fundamentally unsuited to the Indian environment; and that Britain must remain in India to “hold the ring” for a good long-time to come.<sup>35</sup>

32 See, for instance, the references in footnote 27; plus Linlithgow to Zetland, 18 November 1939, Z.C. 18, Linlithgow to Zetland, 9 December 1939 (t/g), L.C. 18, and Linlithgow to Zetland, 30 January 1940 (t/g), L.C. 19.

33 In fact, even as late as November 1942 Linlithgow had not entirely abandoned all hope that the federal scheme would yet prove capable of resurrection. See Linlithgow to Lumby, 25 November 1942, in N. Mansergh and E.W.R. Lumby (eds.), *The Transfer of Power 1942-47*, Vol. III, *Reassertion of authority, Gandhi's fast, and the Succession to the Viceroyalty*, 21 September 1942-12 June 1943 (London, H.M.S.O., 1971), p.305.

34 See Linlithgow to Zetland, 16 October 1939, Z.C. 18.

35 See in particular, Linlithgow to Zetland, 28 November 1939, L.C. 13. Also see Linlithgow to Irwin, 20 January 1931, Halifax Collection 19; and Linlithgow to Zetland, 28 February 1939, Z.C. 18.



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Given the direction in which the Viceroy's mind was moving, Zetland's letter of 6 December could only have come as quite a jolt. Linlithgow replied on 21 December that he remained "unconvinced" by the Secretary of State's proposed new approach and held to the view that "the stage for an advance, or a change of method, so radical as that you mention, has not yet been reached."<sup>36</sup> However, Linlithgow was at least moved by it to propose that he should again see Gandhi and Jinnah individually in an effort to secure some form of agreement in the province as a preparatory step to reaching agreement at the centre.<sup>37</sup>

With the certainty of the new constitutional discussions in the offing, Zetland again opened discussions on the vital constitutional issues which he believed events following the outbreak of war had raised.

On 26 January Zetland wrote to the Viceroy that in his view they were by that stage committed to a radical re-examination of the 1935 Act at the conclusion of the war and to granting India full self-government or dominion status at some so far unspecified date, but a date very much earlier than that contemplated in 1935. There were, Zetland maintained, three possible approaches to implementing these commitments. First, they could undertake to give effect to any constitution which Indians framed themselves, even if this involved forthwith the complete removal of British control. Second, they could undertake to implement any constitution which Indians framed in agreement amongst themselves provided the constitution itself contained safeguards satisfactory to Britain for the provision of her interests and obligations. Or third, a combination of these two whereby Britain would undertake to implement any constitution framed by Indians in agreement, on condition that Britain's continuing obligations and interests were secured by a treaty of limited duration, rather than by provisions in the constitution itself which would necessarily involve the retention of powers by or on behalf of the British Government.

36 Linlithgow to Zetland, 21 December 1939, Z.C. 18; also see Linlithgow to Zetland, 18 December 1939 (t/g), L. C. 158.

37 Linlithgow to Zetland, 21 December 1939, Z.C. 18.



The first approach, Zetland was certain, the Cabinet would not look at. If the second was adopted, he thought the result would really be that of 1935 again, whereby having ascertained the views of Indians about a new constitution, Parliament would retain the right to determine how much of it could be accepted. Zetland had no doubt that such an approach would not be acceptable to either Gandhi or the Congress and would result in a breakdown of further talks. Therefore, Zetland continued to favour, despite the Viceroy's initial reaction, the third approach. Again, to support his preference, Zetland pointed to the likely effects of the war on general thinking and attitudes towards imperial relationships.

As you know I have [the] gravest doubts whether we shall find it possible to justify in the face of world opinion after [the] war our present control in India. On one condition only would this be possible namely that we had offered self-government to India but her people had not been able to settle among themselves on a durable basis terms on which they would accept and exercise it, thus leaving us no option between abandoning India to civil war and chaos or remaining in control. But in that case, it would have to be clear beyond question that offer of self-government had been a real offer, and incidentally our hands would have to be not only scrupulously but *demonstrably* free from any suspicion of using method of 'divide and rule'.<sup>38</sup>

If this approach was accepted, then the essential first step to any progress was Indian agreement, for, Zetland stated, it was inconceivable that they should attempt to coerce any considerable section of the Indian people into accepting a constitution which they believed to be injurious to their interests. Nor did Zetland think that this would even be possible:

It has frequently astonished me of late to find from conversations you have reported to me how persistently the idea prevails among both Hindus and Muslims that it is somehow within [the] power of His Majesty's Government to compel one community to agree against its convictions to [the] demands of [the] others.<sup>39</sup>

38 Zetland to Linlithgow, 26 January 1940 (t/g), L.C. 19.

39 *Ibid.*



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However, Zetland was clear that the stipulation of Indian agreement must be linked with the acceptance by Britain of the results of that agreement. For "until discussion amongst Indians of their communal problem and the possible solutions for it is undertaken in the clear knowledge that they and they alone are responsible for finding and maintaining a solution that communal agreement will never be forthcoming", or, in other words, there would never be communal agreement unless the parties started from the assumption that what they were discussing were the conditions on which they could govern themselves without external control.<sup>40</sup> Zetland also believed that they should make it clear that the British Government could not allow any minority to interrupt the course of reform by using a veto for patently unreasonable purposes; but in this matter, Britain must be the judge of what was a reasonable and unreasonable demand.<sup>41</sup>

However, Linlithgow was still definitely not prepared to go as far as Zetland desired. He hoped to surmount the constitutional impasse by persuading Gandhi to accept a further formal assertion of the British Government's intention of enabling India to attain the status of dominion at the earliest possible date; a small expansion of the Viceroy's Executive Council by the inclusion of Indian political leaders; the inauguration of the federal scheme, with possibly some minor modifications, as soon as the necessary number of Princes could be persuaded to accede; and the promise that at the end of the war there would be consultation with Indians on the revision of the constitution and the framing of proposals to be put to the British Government on the difficult technical questions such as a defence which would have to be settled before India could become a dominion. Linlithgow also now suggested that if they managed to get within sight of satisfactory arrangements concerning Britain's special interests and obligations, the proposals on these might be embodied in the form of a treaty between the new dominion government and the British Government. However, Linlithgow was against committing themselves at that stage on the question of a treaty.<sup>42</sup>

It would seem, then, that Zetland's efforts had achieved a certain amount of success, in that Linlithgow was prepared to consider the possibility of a treaty, and had apparently accepted that India's advance

40 CAB 67/4, W.P. (G) (40) 37, 31 January 1940

41 *Ibid.*

42 See Linlithgow to Zetland, 28 January 1948 (t/g); and Linlithgow to Zetland, 30 January 1940 (t/g), L. C. 19.



to dominion status would be a good deal quicker than he had anticipated at any stage during the opening months of the war. However, it is apparent that Linlithgow contemplated that while the provisions for Britain's interests and obligations might be set out in a treaty, they would also be incorporated in the actual constitution itself.<sup>43</sup> Linlithgow therefore envisioned, in practice, a limited form of self-government or dominion status for India. Thus Linlithgow explained that according to his understanding of the matter, dominion status was nowhere precisely defined, but was the status enjoyed by the existing self-governing Dominions:

But precise relation of each Dominion to His Majesty's Government ... may vary according to local circumstances. In the case of India, while India may be styled a Dominion, it is obvious that there will have to be special arrangements, in particular about defence, probably also about communities [commercial?] discrimination, and, to the extent that the various committees [communities?] etc., here are not able to reach agreement between themselves and would wish for our guarantee, possibly some provision about the position of the minorities. The position of the States in relation to His Majesty's Government and Paramount Power may also call for special provision. The Indian debt and service position are further items. In other words, the Indian Dominion, once we get down to working it out, will be different in its make-up to other Dominions, but that is, as I see it, entirely

43 For instance, in a letter on 27 February, Linlithgow wrote that by dominion status or full self-government, they must mean "a system of government, here from which His Majesty's Government stand aside entirely save to such limited extent (...) as may be necessary to safeguard certain responsibilities". Linlithgow to Zetland, 27 February 1948, Z.C. 19). However, even such a limited direct role in the affairs of an Indian dominion could only be provided for by provisions in the actual constitution itself. As well, in February 1942, during the genesis of the Cripps Mission, when Linlithgow submitted his alternative policy declaration to that put forward by the Prime Minister, one of the confessions he was prepared to make—and then at the behest of certain of his advisers—was that they would not insist "on provisions in the post-war constitution of India for the safeguarding of British interests as such." (Linlithgow to Amery, 25 February 1942 t/g, in Mansergh and Lumby (eds.), *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 244; also see p. 242). Such interests—Linlithgow meant the interests of the British commercial community in India—would be settled by diplomatic negotiations.



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clear with India being a Dominion and enjoying 'Dominion Status'.<sup>44</sup>

Zetland, had already registered his dissent from this point of view. He maintained that to insist upon incorporation in the *dominion constitution itself* of limitations on self-government so fundamental as defence and commercial discrimination could be represented as almost a contradiction in terms. "Will it not", he asked, "lay us open to the old charge of insincerity?"<sup>45</sup>

However, Linlithgow was still not prepared to accept what was the main arch of Zetland's approach, namely, that the task of framing India's future constitution should be transferred from the British Parliament to Indians themselves, subject to their reaching agreement and satisfactorily providing for Britain's special interests and obligations.

Having again failed to convert the Viceroy, Zetland proceeded to bring, for the first time, their differences before the War Cabinet. However, in certain respects, the discussion in the War Cabinet quickly resembled a closed and concentrated version of the extended and vituperative debate on Indian constitutional reform which raged between 1929 and 1935: the main questions considered really came back to the same thing; the leading spokesmen on both sides were little changed;<sup>46</sup> and the differences in outlook and opinion were just as prominent. Of the chief spokesmen, Halifax and Hoare gave Zetland general support while Churchill and Simon indicated very strong dissent.<sup>47</sup> In view of

44 Linlithgow to Zetland, 28 January 1940 (t/g), L.C. 19.

45 Zetland to Linlithgow, 17 January 1940, Z.C. 12.

46 The War Cabinet included Lord Halifax who, as Lord Irwin, had been Viceroy from 1931; Sir Samuel Hoare who had been Secretary of State for India from 1931 to 1935; Sir John Simon, the chairman of the Indian Statutory Commission appointed in 1927; and Winston Churchill who resigned from the Conservative Party "Shadow Cabinet" in 1931 in protest against its India policy.

47 The contrasting positions are best put by Halifax and Churchill. According to Halifax: "the Indian problem was dynamic and not static, and our difficulties were liable to increase unless we faced the fundamental issues. If we decided to stand firmly on our existing position, strong forces would probably accumulate against us. It was better to attempt to direct those forces into safe channels." Churchill, on the other hand, did not share "the anxiety to encourage and promote unity between the Hindu and Moslem communities. Such unity was, in fact, almost out of the realm of practical politics, while, if it



the strength of this division, the Prime Minister was naturally reluctant to force the matter to a decision unless necessary. He therefore suggested, and the War Cabinet agreed, that the Viceroy should be authorised to open up conversations on the lines which he had proposed; but that he should report back to the War Cabinet if he found progress on these lines impossible.<sup>48</sup>

However, the need to make a decision was rendered unnecessary when Linlithgow met Gandhi on 5 February. Gandhi merely reiterated the full Congress demand and demonstrated no preparedness to budge in any way. After Linlithgow had outlined his proposals, Gandhi responded that there was clearly insufficient ground to render further discussions profitable at that stage: to this Linlithgow agreed.<sup>49</sup>

Following this latest breakdown in discussions, Linlithgow had no doubt that the best course was "to refrain from action, and to let the situation develop".<sup>50</sup> And the main development which Linlithgow subsequently observed was what he considered to be a marked stiffening in the attitude of the minorities, particularly the Muslims, and the Princess, towards constitutional advance save on their own terms.<sup>51</sup> Linlithgow now considered that the increasing complexity and hardening of the Indian problem was such as to seriously put back the timetable for India's advance to any form of self-government.<sup>52</sup>

Zetland, however, was not content to merely follow the Viceroy's line. At the beginning of February, Zetland expressed his concern at the verbal warfare which the Indian leaders seemed so intent on waging, and raised the possibility of convening a small informal conference for an exchange of views on the question of safeguarding of the position of minorities under a dominion status situation.<sup>53</sup> By the middle of February Zetland was inclined to go still further by suggesting that they

were to be brought about, the immediate result would be that the united communities would join in showing us the door. He regarded the Hindu-Moslem feud as a bulwark of British rule in India." CAB 65/5, W.M.30 (40), 2 February 1940.

48 *Ibid.*

49 Note of a conversation with Mr. Gandhi, 5 February 1940, in Linlithgow to Zetland, 6/7 February 1940, Z.C. 19.

50 Linlithgow to Zetland, 13 February 1940, Z.C. 19.

51 See Linlithgow to Zetland, 13 February and 27 February 1940, Z. C. 19; and Linlithgow to Zetland, 8 March 1940, (t/g), L.C. 28.

52 See Linlithgow to Zetland, 27 February 1940, Z.C. 19.

53 Zetland to Linlithgow, 4/9 February 1940, Z.C. 12; also see Zetland to Linlithgow, 1 February 1940, Z.C. 12.



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should proceed with the interim concessions already offered — the expansion of the Viceroy's Executive Council and the establishment of some form of consultative committee — irrespective of whether the Congress was willing to participate or not. This would at least give the Government the initiative once more whereas if they did nothing constructive it would look as if they could only wait for the Congress to make the next move.<sup>54</sup> The Viceroy, however, remained unmoved. Linlithgow agreed that such a move would be good publicity in Britain and abroad, but this, he considered, must be balanced against the argument that in India it would look like they were running after the Congress.<sup>55</sup>

Having again failed to shift the Viceroy, on 11 March Zetland launched another attempt to convince the War Cabinet that there was danger in standing stationary, and that the effect of the war required a new approach to the solving of the Indian constitutional problem.

In a memorandum of that date, Zetland informed the War Cabinet of his inability to accept the Viceroy's opinion that their course ought to be to wait upon events. The Viceroy, he thought, seemed to be proceeding upon the mistaken assumption that the only alternative to a policy of inaction was to make concessions to the Congress. However, Zetland argued that if they went ahead with their interim offer this could not give the Congress any ground for claiming that they had forced the hand of the Government; and, in any case, he did not believe that the fact that the Congress had declined to be associated with this move should be a bar to the natural desire of Indian public men to be associated with the central government in the prosecution of the war. Zetland therefore argued that the Viceroy should be invited by the War Cabinet to give further consideration to the advantages of such a move.

Zetland then turned to the wider question of the principles and basis of the Government's long term policy in India. Zetland warned that a policy of "lying back" would not serve for very long, even if there was no early resort by the Congress to civil disobedience, and that in either event there was every advantage in securing the initiative. On the one side, if the Congress did resort to civil disobedience, it would be essential to have some constructive plan of action to balance against the forcibler repression which would be necessary, for otherwise public

<sup>54</sup> Zetland to Linlithgow, 15 February 1940, Z.C. 12; and Zetland to Linlithgow, 5 March 1940, Z.C. 12.

<sup>55</sup> Linlithgow to Zetland, 5 March 1940, Z.C. 19.



opinion in neutral countries, and particularly in the United States was "likely to be extremely, perhaps dangerously, critical"; and, as well, there was no advantage in waiting for the initiation of a new long term policy until they were forced into this by disorder or the threat of disorder. On the other hand, even if there was no early resort to civil disobedience by the Congress, there was no hope of an agreed solution or of a peaceful settlement of their constitutional relations with India if those relations and the constitution itself were to be dedicated to India in the last resort by the British Government and Parliament; and, moreover, the idea that the British Government should decide the nature of India's constitution was "difficult to reconcile even now with the principles for which they were at war", and at the end of the war they would not be able to adhere to such a procedure.

Zetland therefore proposed that when the appropriate moment arrived, the Viceroy should summon a small conference representative of opinion in British India and the States, and that he should put to such a conference a plan for the solution of the Indian constitutional problem along the lines Zetland had previously proposed.

Zetland did not ask the War Cabinet to commit themselves there and then to such an approach. Instead, he suggested that they should authorise him to send the plan to the Viceroy "with an indication that subject to his comments, they would be disposed to give favourable consideration to it."<sup>56</sup>

Once again, however, the War Cabinet divided sharply into two schools of thought, and again the Prime Minister hedged at forcing the issue to a decision. Noting that the Viceroy proposed to make a further report on the situation after the forthcoming Congress session, he concluded that it seemed best to await this before taking a decision on the next step.<sup>57</sup>

However, the need for taking a decision was soon put back even further when at the Muslim League meeting of 22-23 March the Muslim demand for a separate political identity was transposed into a demand for separate national identity with what was quickly termed the

<sup>56</sup> See CAB 67/4, W.P. (G) (40) 73, 11 March 1940.

<sup>57</sup> CAB 65/6, W.M. 69 (40), 15 March 1940.



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"Pakistan resolution."<sup>58</sup> Whatever the ambiguities in the wording of this resolution, it constituted a clear call for the partition of the Indian sub-continent. Muslim separatism was finally pushed to its limits.

The hardening of the Muslim position, Zetland advised the War Cabinet on 12 April, had "introduced a new and disturbing feature into the situation."<sup>59</sup> He admitted that no good purpose would be served by proceeding at that stage with the type of plan he had previously outlined. But Zetland hastened to add that he had not changed his views, and that when the time was ripe a solution along these lines would again require serious consideration.

Zetland did, though, have hopes of portraying British policy in a more favourable light than had previously been done, by admitting in a speech he was due to make in the House of Lords that the Government accepted the reasonableness of the claim that Indians should have a "predominant" say in devising the form of constitution under which they would live. There was, however, some demur at this from the more right wing and Zetland was obliged to substitute the word "vital" for "predominant".<sup>60</sup> In view of this, Zetland refrained from communicating to the War Cabinet a further phrase that he proposed to use, namely, that the undertaking given by the Government to examine the constitutional field in consultation with representatives of all parties and interests in India "connotes not dictation but negotiation".<sup>61</sup>

It was not just the War Cabinet, though, with which Zetland had difficulties as to the contents of his speech. On 4 April, Zetland informed the Viceroy that he must "make this debate the occasion for pouring much cold water on the Muslim idea of partition" though not necessarily at that stage conclusively rejecting it. Zetland proposed to emphasize that partition "would be a counsel of despair and wholly at variance with the policy of a united India which British rule has achieved and which it is our aim to perpetuate after British rule ceases."<sup>62</sup>

58 For details of the Muslim League meeting, see *Indian Annual Register*, 1940, I, pp, 310-12.

59 CAB 65/6, W.M. 89 (40), 12 April 1940.

60 *Ibid.*

61 Zetland to Linlithgow, 24 April 1940, Z.C. 12.

62 Zetland to Linlithgow, 4 April 1940, (t/g), L.C. 19.



While expressing sympathy with Zetland's attitude, Linlithgow urged "the great importance" of not saying anything which would antagonise the Muslims.<sup>63</sup> Zetland appreciated the Viceroy's desire not to upset Jinnah and the League but he still felt that he could not say anything less than that he regarded the League's partition proposal "as constituting something not far short of a counsel of despair."<sup>64</sup>

By the third week of April, Zetland was again gently pressing the Viceroy on the possibility of some sort of interim move. He put a suggestion to Linlithgow from the Indian Liberal, M. R. Jayakar, that they should ignore the Congress and the League and proceed with the expansion of the Viceroy's Executive Council, for this would at least convince moderate Indians of Britain's sincerity.<sup>65</sup> However, while Linlithgow continued to remain unmoved by entreaties from Indian moderates, he was moved when in late April Gandhi unexpectedly reopened correspondence with a letter critical of the recent speech by Lord Zetland in the House of Lords.<sup>66</sup> Both Linlithgow and Zetland were somewhat puzzled at this unexpected move and wondered whether it had any further purpose. It was agreed that an initial reply should be sent which gave nothing away, thus leaving it to Gandhi to make the next move and to expose a little more surface. If developments were favourable, Linlithgow tentatively suggested that he might again send for Gandhi and Jinnah; though he believed such a move would be more productive of good publicity than positive progress.<sup>67</sup>

On 12 May, Gandhi's reply, which in effect said that if Britain wished to put herself morally right she should make an unconditional declaration conceding India's right to self-determination, was received.<sup>68</sup> In spite of this unencouraging reply, Zetland favoured the Viceroy proceeding with his suggested initiative, though, hardly surprisingly, indicating that further discussions on the terms of the statement which Linlithgow proposed to make to Gandhi and Jinnah would be needed.<sup>69</sup>

63 Linlithgow to Zetland, 8 April 1940 (t/g), L.C. 19.

64 *Lords' Debates*, Vol. 116, col. 173, 18 April 1940; and Zetland to Linlithgow, 24 April 1940, Z.C. 12.

65 Zetland to Linlithgow, 24 April 1940, Z.C. 12.

66 See text in Linlithgow, to Zetland, 27 April 1940 (t/g), L.C. 19.

67 Linlithgow to Zetland, 11 May 1940 (t/g), L.C. 19.

68 Linlithgow to Zetland, 12 May 1940 (t/g), L.C. 19.

69 Zetland to Linlithgow, 14 May 1940 (t/g), L.C. 19.



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However, Zetland could press the Viceroy and further, his political career was abruptly terminated by events in Britain which led to the downfall of the Chamberlain Cabinet. As Zetland wrote in his parting letter to the Viceroy, the approach of the new Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, to the Indian problem "differs so fundamentally from my own that my inclusion in his Government was scarcely possible: I should indeed, only have ended by being an embarrassment to him."<sup>70</sup> On this last point Zetland was undoubtedly correct.

## III

It is, of course, easy and tempting to paint Linlithgow and the right wing members of the War Cabinet as the villains of this section of the demission of power, and to leave it at that. But possibly there is profit in going beyond this to look at the admittedly hypothetical question of whether Zetland's proposed solution could have provided a way out of the constitutional conundrum; the full extent of the intractability of the Indian constitutional problem by this time should be then more apparent.

While there can, of course, be no certainty there is reason to believe that Zetland's approach would not have proved acceptable to at least the Congress. Satisfactory agreement could probably have been reached over interim constitutional changes for the war period; for during the early stages of the war, the Congress was prepared to be quite reasonable over war time changes so long as they received satisfaction with respect to Britain's post-war intentions.<sup>71</sup>

Satisfactory agreement might also have been reached with respect to the securing of Britain's obligations and interests by means of a scheduled treaty. If properly observed, a scheduled treaty would of course have restricted the free functioning of an Indian dominion government; but all the same, it would in no way have been comparable to the Act of 1935 where Britain's interests and obligations were protected by reservations and safeguards in the actual constitution itself. Under

<sup>70</sup> Zetland to Linlithgow, 14 May 1940, Z.C. 12.

<sup>71</sup> See, for instance, the note by D. Young of an interview with Pandit Nehru 21 September 1939, L/P and J/8/505: ff. 423-8.



the type of treaty envisioned by Zetland, two separate agents, the British Government and an Indian dominion government, would enter into an agreement by which the latter would undertake to observe, for a fixed period, certain provisions in its everyday functioning; if the Indian dominion at any stage refused to do so, then Britain's only real recourse was some form of duress. Possibly, as Sir Samuel Hoare suggested, the maintenance of a British garrison in India would have ensured the observance of such a treaty.<sup>72</sup> However, if it had actually come to the test, it must be questionable whether force, in the face of world opinion and Indian resistance, would have been a practicable option. Certainly a similar treaty with South Ireland proved no hindrance to that Dominion's national aspirations; after Eamon de Valera came to power in 1932, Eire dismantled the treaty piece by piece before walking out of the Commonwealth altogether in 1948.<sup>73</sup> And, in fact, in November 1939 one of the leading Congress figures, Rajagopalachari, suggested that Britain's continuing interests in India could be settled by means of a separate treaty along the lines of the Irish example.<sup>74</sup> Gandhi, too, in a private conversation with the Indian industrialist G. D. Birla indicated that Britain's continuing interests in India in such areas as defence, India's sterling debt, safeguards against commercial discrimination, and the fate of British members of the Indian Civil Service, could be dealt with apart from the actual proceedings of the constituent assembly, by means of negotiations between the British Government and the constituent assembly. In cases of disagreement, Gandhi suggested that the matter could be arbitrated by some sort of body of Empire statesmen.<sup>75</sup>

However, the Congress would have found difficulty in accepting the British insistence that representatives of the Princes should be included in any constitution-making body. In November 1939 the Congress Working Committee had, in fact, specifically excluded the

<sup>72</sup> CAB 65/5, W.M. 30 (40), February 1940.

<sup>73</sup> For the Irish precedent, see W.K. Hancock, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs*. Vol. I, *Problems of Nationality*, 1918-1936 (London, O.U.P., 1937), pp.320-92; and N. Mansergh, *The Commonwealth Experience* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), pp. 320-27.

<sup>74</sup> See Rajagopalachari's statement dated 15 November 1939, in M. Gwyer and A. Appadorai (eds.), *Speeches and documents on the Indian Constitution 1921-47* (Bombay, O.U.P. 1957), I, 475.

<sup>75</sup> Note on conversations with Mr. Gandhi held during November 1939, by G.D. Birla (undated) in Linlithgow to Zetland, 30 November 1939, Z.C. 18.



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Princes from participation in a constituent assembly.<sup>76</sup> But the Congress would have found even greater difficulty in accepting the British insistence that the composition and method of procedure of the constituent-making body should be agreed upon beforehand by representatives of the Hindus, Muslims and Princes; after all, one of the principal advantages, from the Congress point of view, of its demand for a constituent assembly elected by adult suffrage, or something close to it was that it circumvented the need for reaching agreement with those "reactionary" Princes and those "impossible" self-proclaimed Muslim communal leaders. Instead, the Congress leaders naturally argued, it would be the Indian people rather than the party leaders who would frame a communal and constitutional settlement through the agency of their duly elected and empowered representatives.<sup>77</sup> In practice, though it was almost certain that it would be the will of the major parties which would dominate an elected constituent assembly, for, as Sir Maurice Gwyer, the Chief Justice of India, pointed out, the Congress and the Muslim League would give their support to such candidates as followed their leadership and were prepared to accept their whip.<sup>78</sup> This, however, would still mean that the professions of Jinnah and his supporters to represent the Muslim community would be put to the harsh test of electoral politics; a test Congress leaders evidently doubted they would survive.<sup>79</sup> Also the Congress leaders argued that there could

76 *Indian Annual Register*, 1939, II, p. 238.

77 See the argument by Rajagopalachari, 15 November 1939, in Gwyer and Appadorai (eds.), *op. cit.*, II, 475. In fact, the whole idea of a constituent assembly had been very much Nehru's "pet scheme" for some years past; however, Gandhi had retained a certain amount of scepticism despite its adoption in Congress resolutions since 1934. But with the communal situation, which events following the outbreak of the war had highlighted, becoming palpably more difficult, Gandhi proceeded to give the idea new consideration and became an enthusiastic convert. It was Gandhi's endorsement which explains the idea being put in the forefront of the Congress programme. See *Harijan*, 25 November 1939.

78 See the note of a conversation with Mr. Bhulabhai Desai, 10 March 1940, by Sir M. Gwyer, L/P & J/8/506b; ff. 125-30.

79 For instance, in a statement on 31 October 1939, Nehru maintained: "... the Muslim masses are firm adherents of Indian freedom. In some communal matters the League may represent them, but it certainly does not do so in matters political." J. Nehru, *The Unity of India: Collected Writings 1937-40*, (London, L. Drummond, 1941), p. 346.



be no *final* communal and constitutional settlement with the Muslim League as such, for a settlement initialled by the Muslim League could be overthrown at some later stage by that organisation or any successor to it. There could only be finality where the representatives of a community were only elected, and therefore empowered, by the community as a whole to speak and act on their behalf.<sup>80</sup>

The difference between the British and the Congress over this was fundamental. The British believed that India was not sufficiently homogeneous to allow for the framing of a constitution by the mere counting of heads, and that a stable and peaceful Indian dominion constitution could therefore only be founded upon the basis of agreement between the main elements in Indian society, and more particularly between Hindus and Muslims. Such agreement must therefore precede any final devolution by Britain of its responsibility for the government of India to Indian hands; to do otherwise would result in the collapse of India into chaos, or the enforcement by British arms of the rule of the majority community upon the minorities. The Congress, on the other hand, denied that the Princes were an element deserving of consideration — admittedly when it came to the test the British too largely accepted this view and maintained that there would never be communal agreement in India until the British agreed to stand aside by telling the minorities, particularly the Muslims, that they must reach agreement with the majority community, the corollary being that the British must be prepared to accept and endorse the majority decision.<sup>81</sup> The Congress were reinforced in this view by the conviction that they alone stood for the interests of all sections of Indian society, and that the communal politicians were not truly representative.

<sup>80</sup> See the note on conversations with Mr. Gandhi held during November 1939; by G.D. Birla (undated), in Linlithgow to Zetland, 30 November, 1939, Z. C. 18; and the argument by Rajagopalachari in Gwyer and Appadorai (eds.), *op. cit.*, II, 475.

<sup>81</sup> Thus Gandhi explained to G. D. Birla that a constituent assembly would only succeed "if His Majesty's Government realise that subject to all safeguards of the minorities and other problem, the political question has to be settled only with the Congress... Congress is the only political body. Other bodies are small communal bodies. Their opinion must carry weight but only on religious and communal matters." (See the note by Birla in Linlithgow to Zetland, 30 November 1939, Z.C. 18). The Congress fear was that so long as Britain remained in the political picture, the Muslims, secure in the thought that the British would back them, could put forward any unreasonable demand at the threat of blocking constitutional progress. Therefore, the Muslims would only come down to reality and settle with the majority community when the British stepped aside.



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It would have been a task of very considerable difficulty to find a way round these diametrically opposite but deeply held views of Indian society. Given these preconceptions, how much more could the British have offered and how much less could the Congress have accepted?

Moreover, even if Zetland's proposals had proved acceptable to the main Indian parties, this would still only have constituted the first step towards a dull solution of the Indian constitutional problem; for these proposals, after all, only outlined a method of procedure by which a constitution for a united Indian dominion might be framed after the war. The serious obstacles of reaching agreement on the composition of the constitution making body, and, most difficult of all, the method by which it would frame the detailed constitution would still have remained to be conquered. Zetland succinctly explained the difficulty on this last point when he wrote:

the task of statesmanship will be to find the mean between decisions by a bare majority which might well override all the demands of minorities, and stipulations for acceptance of motions by such proportions of the voters as would preclude all possibility of agreement.<sup>82</sup>

Even then given the width of the gulf between the Muslim and the Congress-Hindu conceptions of India's constitutional future,<sup>83</sup> a general spirit of tolerance and compromise would have been needed if there were not to be walk-outs along communal lines from any constitution-making body.

This is not to argue that by 1939 the constitutional problem was insoluble, and that all the actions and efforts of the leading figures in the last stage of British Raj counted for nought. There is, for instance, truth in the following observation by Lord Wavell in July 1944: "I wonder if we shall ever have any chance of a solution till the three intransigent, obstinate, uncompromising principals are out of the way: Gandhi (just on 75), Jinnah (68), Winston (nearing 76)."<sup>84</sup> But in view

82 See "Explanatory Note" appended to Zetland to Linlithgow, 6 December 1939, Z.C. 11.

83 The extent to which the Hindu and Muslim visions had diverged even by the 1920s can be seen in the controversy surrounding the Nehru Report of 1928. See Moore, *Crisis of Indian Unity*, pp. 33-40.

84 P. Moon (ed.), *Wavell: The Viceroy's Journal*, (London, O.U.P., 1973), p. 79.



of the triangular situation existing in India between the British, the Congress and the Muslim League, plus the continued growth of separatist forces within India throughout the twentieth century; it is open to question how much room the main actors still had to influence the course of events in the final years of the British Raj. However, to whatever extent there was in fact a freedom of manoeuvre remaining in 1939-40, given the views, attitudes and preconceptions of the leading actors, both British and Indian, there was little chance that it would be utilised to find a solution to the constitutional problem which gave India both freedom and unity. But this is not to deny the foresight and intellectual integrity of an aristocratic and conservative Secretary of State who realised before most that the outbreak of war meant that the Raj could not be the same again, and that thus a sincere and honest attempt would have to be made to honour to Montagu's promise of 1917.



## Nationalist India and the Issue of Commonwealth Membership

BY

T. A. KEENLEYSIDE

### *Introduction*

Throughout their struggle for independence, the majority of Indians evinced little immediate interest in the British Commonwealth as a political institution. Although from 1917 onwards the Government of India was represented independently at Imperial Conferences, it was evident that India's status at these meetings was vastly inferior to the dominions, since India was represented by the Secretary of State for India, a member of the British Cabinet, while the prime ministers of the dominions participated in their own right. Further, the views of the Indian delegations generally paralleled those of the British Government, since the briefs of both countries were prepared in Whitehall. By contrast, the dominions were at liberty to pursue their own independent policies. Since the British Government bore ultimate responsibility for India's Commonwealth role and since, in any case, the Government of India was not representative of opinion, the Indian public was not one, but two steps removed from an effective voice in Commonwealth affairs. As a consequence, apart from the vital question of the welfare of Indians resident in different parts of the British Empire, an issue which aroused the passions of all Indians, most of the public demonstrated little interest in the joint deliberations and activities of the Commonwealth. On the other hand, for over two decades prior to the independence, there was a lively debate among Indians regarding what the future relationship of the sub-continent to the Commonwealth should be—whether the freedom struggle should be directed towards obtaining independence within the structure of the British Commonwealth of Nations or outside it. In the vocabulary of the time, this dispute was known as the dominion status versus complete independence debate, and its outcome was to prove of importance not only to India, but to the future status of all British colonies. It is the purpose of this study to examine the attitudes of the major national Indian political



organizations towards this issue of India's future relationship with the Commonwealth, looking first at the proponents of complete independence and secondly at the supporters of Commonwealth membership.<sup>1</sup> Subsequently, this study analyzes the significance, for the ultimate Indian decision in favour of Commonwealth membership, of the ambivalent position of the Indian National Congress in this debate.

### *The Proponents of Complete Independence*

With respect to the Indian National Congress, where the debate about the Commonwealth raged particularly acutely, opinion was sharply divided, and throughout the decades prior to independence the organization balanced uncertainly between acceptance and rejection of the Commonwealth idea. In fact, the internal Congress debate about Commonwealth membership started as early as the anti-partition agitation in Bengal when the radical Indian leaders, Sri Aurobindo Ghosh and Bepin Chandra Pal, first advocated complete independence for India and severance of the British connection. After 1909, however, this movement languished until the latter half of 1920, when those favouring complete independence began persistently to engage the Congress promoters of dominion status in a tussle over the political creed of the Congress.<sup>2</sup> At the Madras Congress of 1927, they won an apparent victory when, for the first time, the Congress in part in response to the despatch to India of the unrepresentative Simon Commission on constitutional reform, passed a resolution, moved by Jawaharlal Nehru and amended by S. Satyamurti, declaring 'the goal of the Indian people to be complete national independence.'<sup>3</sup> Superficially at least, the Congress appeared to have shifted its goal from dominion status to severance of the British link, and although the Congress temporarily reversed its position at the Calcutta session in 1938, at the Lahore meeting in 1929 it reverted permanently to the

1 Although for analytical purposes, it is useful to present such a dichotomy, in reality there was no precise division between opponents and supporters of the Commonwealth. In their attitudes towards the organization Indians ranged over a wide spectrum of differing views which represented varying degrees of attraction and repulsion regarding the idea of Commonwealth membership.

2 For details of the early years of the debate, see S.R. Mehrotra, *India and the Commonwealth 1885-1929* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1965), pp. 107-47.

3 *The Hindu Weekly* (Madras), December 29, 1927.



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undefined goal of 'complete independence.' Thus after 1929, the Congress gave the appearance of being opposed to the retention of the commonwealth connection, a position reinforced by the Independence Day pledge, taken by Congress supporters every 26 January from 1930 onward, by which they committed themselves to severance of the British connection and the attainment of 'Purna Swaraj or complete independence.'

The opposition to dominion status and hence to Commonwealth membership was led by the more militant nationalists in the Congress, including such figures as Jawaharlal Nehru, Srinivasa Iyengar, Vithalbhai Patel, C. S. Ranga Iyer and Subhas Bose. In 1928, they formed the Independence for India League, whose object was to lead the agitation within the Congress for the attainment of complete independence.<sup>4</sup> Many of the opponents were avowed socialists and banded together in 1934 to form the Congress Socialist Party, an organization within the Indian National Congress dedicated to the achievement of complete independence, defined as meaning 'total separation from the British Empire.'<sup>5</sup>

The Congress proponents of complete independence argued that the idea of dominion status was incapable of arousing a desire on the part of the Indian people for freedom and of inculcating a capacity for sacrifice in the national interest.<sup>6</sup> Only by setting its goal at complete independence, they claimed, could the Congress dissolve the vague conceptions in India of what it was struggling for, and only then would it be clear that Indians were earnest about a rapid revolutionary change in their political position. 'The independence ideal alone will create the true Swaraj mentality,' wrote S. Satyamurti in 1929.<sup>7</sup>

In the economic and social sphere, radical Congressmen claimed that any national objective short of complete independence would only serve further to entrench vested interests.<sup>8</sup> Dominion status for India

4 *The Statesman* (Calcutta), Sept. 1, 1928; *The Hindu Weekly*, Sept. 6, 1928.

5 *The Leader* (Allahabad), October 24, 1934.

6 See *Indian Quarterly Register*, 2 (1928): 448.

7 S. Satyamurti, 'The Political Philosophy of National Independence,' *New Era* 1, no. 5 (February, 1929): 404. See also R. Dwivedi (ed.), *Life and Speeches of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru* (Allahabad: National, 1929), p. 104; *The Indian National Herald* (Bombay), March 22, 1928; *Indian Quarterly Register*, 2 (1928): 362.

8 Dwivedi, pp. 208-9; *The Hindu Weekly*, October 4, 1928.



would 'result in giving a dominant position to foreign capital,' which would mean 'foreign exploitation,' Jawaharlal Nehru asserted.<sup>9</sup> Many Indians, including Nehru, concluded, therefore, that the creation of an egalitarian, socialist society was only attainable by severing all connections with Britain and, hence, British capitalism.<sup>10</sup>

The discrimination inflicted on Indians resident abroad also prompted many Congressmen to support complete independence on the grounds that overseas Indians were 'worse off inside the Empire than outside.'<sup>11</sup> For instance, commenting on the passing of new discriminatory legislation in South Africa, Jawaharlal Nehru said in 1939:

Political rights have been denied us for long; now even human rights are being withheld. This is the Empire to which we have the misfortune to be tied. The sooner this Empire ends, the better for humanity; the sooner we cut away from it, the better for us.<sup>12</sup>

Allied to this argument was the conviction that India would never become a free and equal partner in the Commonwealth on the same basis as the dominions because of the unbridgeable cultural and racial gap between India and the white dominions. 'India can never have a place in the British Empire as a self-governing Dominion, for it appears impossible that the two races can mix with each other on terms of perfect equality,' wrote the pro-Congress *Indian National Herald* editorially. 'It is a commonwealth of white and not of brown or black people, and it is foolish for any Indian, however loyal he may be, to hope for a place in the British Empire.'<sup>13</sup> Similarly, in a press interview in 1928, Srinivasa Iyengar said that the Indian people were 'racially different from the English' and could 'never therefore be equal partners in an Empire.'<sup>14</sup>

Fundamentally, however, opposition to dominion status and the Commonwealth stemmed from the belief that to accept dominion status

9 Dwivedi, p. 147.

10 *Indian Quarterly Register*, 2 (1929): 428.

11 *The Free Press Journal*, quoted in *The Indian Review*, 36, no. 7 (July, 1935): 480. See also *Aj in Native Newspaper Reports, United Provinces*, no. 27 (1934): 4.

12 *The Indian Review*, 40, no. 7 (July, 1939): 461. See also Jawaharlal Nehru, *India and the World* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1936), p. 204; Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (London: Meridian, 1951), p. 398.

13 *The Indian National Herald*, August 22, 1928.

14 *The Pioneer* (Allahabad), May 9, 1928,



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was to condone British rule in the sub-continent and enmesh the Congress in the 'spider web of imperialism.'<sup>15</sup> To radical Indians, Britain was the 'arch-priest of imperialism'<sup>16</sup> and they felt that dominion status would be no guarantee of liberation from its oppressive grasp. 'Ultimate authority cannot rest in two nations,' wrote S. Satyamurti in 1929. 'Under Dominion Status, the ultimate authority will rest only in Great Britain. India cannot acquiesce in that.'<sup>17</sup> In the opinion of Srinivasa Iyengar, dominion status could 'only be a camouflage and nothing but a perpetuation of the present bondage with its terrific moral and material disadvantages.'<sup>18</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru also argued that Indian freedom could only be meaningful if relations with Britain were severed because of what he believed to be the inherent imperialist nature of the British Commonwealth. 'Because Britain today represents imperialism, our freedom can only come after the British connection is severed,' he wrote.<sup>19</sup> Despite the Statute of Westminster in 1931, legalizing the *de facto* independence of the dominions, many Indians still doubted that dominion status was commensurate with complete independence and that if it were obtained by India it would be symbolic of the recession of British imperialism. The pro-Congress *Modern Review*, for example, wrote in 1933:

Moreover, even after the passing of the Westminster Statute, the self-governing Dominions of the British Empire do not possess 'National Sovereignty' in the sense in which France, Japan, Italy, U.S.A., etc, possess it. British Dominions may be content with a political status within their Empire which is somewhat inferior to complete national sovereignty. They may be satisfied with relations of inter-dependence with Great Britain only or mainly because they are British. But if a large country inhabited by a non-European and non-Christian people has to imagine a political future for itself, why should it not imagine its destiny linked in an independent manner with the whole world instead of with the British Empire alone?<sup>20</sup>

15 *Indian Quarterly Register*, 2 (1928): 439.

16 Dwivedi, p. 146.

17 Satyamurti, *loc.cit.*, 404.

18 *The Pioneer*, May 9, 1938. See also *The Statesman*, September 5, 1928.

19 Jawaharlal Nehru, 'Whither India,' *The Leader*, Oct. 13, 1933.

20 *The Modern Review*, 54, no. 1 (July, 1933): 115.



Even if they acknowledged that the Statute of Westminster had conferred complete independence on the old dominions, Congress opponents of the Commonwealth link doubted that India would ever obtain dominion status in the same form. Thus, in 1937, Nehru said that under the cover of dominion status 'the tentacles of imperialism' would 'creep up to hold' India 'in their grip, though the outer structure might be good to look at.'<sup>21</sup> For India, then Commonwealth membership would, in the view of the radicals, always be something less than complete independence.

Although domestic considerations predominated in the opposition to dominion status, some Congress leaders also rejected the British Commonwealth because they felt that membership would be incompatible with an international outlook, since they believed that the interests of the British Empire conflicted with the objective of world peace. Speaking at the Punjab Provincial Conference in April, 1928, Jawaharlal Nehru said that 'the British Commonwealth in spite of its high sounding name' did 'not stand for . . . international cooperation, and in its world policy' and 'consistently stood for a narrow and selfish ideal and against the peace of the world.'<sup>22</sup> Elsewhere, he said that it was not through Britain's empire that India could 'march to internationalism'<sup>23</sup> because if India got dominion status she would have to 'fit' her 'foreign policy with the foreign policy of England . . . support England in Egypt, in China and elsewhere.'<sup>24</sup> In this way, India would give up the cause of the suffering nations who were looking to her for help and would, thus, abandon her bonds with the anti-imperialist world.<sup>25</sup> Commonwealth membership also was opposed on the grounds that to be involved in such a limited organization, even should British imperialism be liquidated, would impede the realization of the higher objective of world federation. Thus, in 1936, the *Modern Review* advised that true internationalism

<sup>21</sup> *Indian Annual Register*, 1 (1937): 210.

<sup>22</sup> Dwivedi, pp. 86, 136-7.

<sup>23</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, 'Whither India?' *The Leader*, October 14, 1933.

<sup>24</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, *Jawaharlal Nehru, Statements, Speeches and Writings* (Allahabad: L. Ram Mohan Lal, 1929), p. 109.

<sup>25</sup> *Indian Annual Register*, 2 (1928): 35. See also S. Satyamurti in *Indian Quarterly Register*, 1 (1931): 338; Taraknath Das, 'India and the British Commonwealth of Nations', *The Calcutta Review*, 29, nos. 2-3 (November-December, 1928): 152; *The Modern Review*, 60, no. 6 (Dec., 1936): 706.



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would be derived not from narrow association in the British Commonwealth alone but through 'membership, by free choice, as a world Federation of Commonwealths of Countries and Nations.'<sup>26</sup>

As well as the left wing of the Congress, radical Muslims who entertained pan-Islamic ambitions also opposed the idea of Commonwealth membership. Muslim opposition to the idea of Commonwealth commenced in 1921 during the period of the Khilafat movement when young Muslim radicals, the primary supporters of the agitation to reinstate the deposed Sultan of Turkey as spiritual leader of Islam, began demanding complete independence for India on the grounds that it was intolerable that Muslims be enslaved by non-Islamic, imperial rule.<sup>27</sup> The Khilafatists, under the leadership of such people as the Ali brothers, Maulana Hasrat Mohani and Mohammad Alam, continued to function as a Pan-Islamic movement long after the death of the Khilafat issue itself and, in keeping with their aspirations of creating a new political order founded on the religious unity of Muslim states, consistently supported severance of the British link until 1920. However, with the holding of the first constitutional Round Table Conference in London in November, 1930, the Khilafat zeal for separation moderated. At the conference, the movement's veteran leader, Mohamed Ali, demanded only that the British grant the 'substance of freedom.'<sup>28</sup> Nonetheless, despite the increasing atrophy of Khilafat organization after 1930, opposition to the Commonwealth remained strong within the Muslim League among many young pan-Islamists and socialists and those who felt that British foreign policy in the Middle East — particularly in Palestine, Egypt, Iraq and the Arabian Peninsula — was intentionally anti-Muslim.<sup>29</sup> At the October, 1937 session of The All-India Muslim League, the opponents of the Commonwealth managed to pass a resolution changing the creed of the League to 'the establishment in India of full independence in the form of a federation of free democratic

26 *The Modera Review*, 60, no. 6 (December 1936): 706. Nehru echoed the same view in later years. See Jawaharlal Nehru, *Eighteen Months in India* (Allahabad: Kitabstan, 1938), p. 118; *The Unity of India, Collected Writings 1937-1940* (London: Lindsay Drummond, 1948), p. 271; *The Discovery of India*, p. 398.

27 *Indian Annual Register*, 1 (1922): 68-77.

28 Cmd. 3778, 1931. *Indian Round Table Conference, First Session, November 12, 1930-January 19, 1931, Proceedings*, p. 98.

29 At the 1937 Muslim League session, for example, the radical Muslim leader Abdul Rahman Siddiqi, moved a resolution warning the British Government that if it failed to alter its pro-Jewish policy in Palestine, Indian Muslims would 'look upon Britain as an enemy of Islam.' *Indian Annual Register*, 2 (1937): 405.



states.' While the mover of the resolution, Maulana Hasrat Mohani, said that he was personally in favour of establishing an Indian Republic on socialist lines, he, nonetheless, admitted that the resolution did not rule out an Indian connection with Great Britain.<sup>30</sup> Thus, although the promoters of the resolution may have been animated by anti-British and anti-Commonwealth feelings the success of the motion did not indicate that the majority of the League favoured severance of the British connection, but simply that the League was now united in the objective of full self-government.

Finally, opposition to the Commonwealth came also from Indian communists who, on ideological grounds, favoured complete independence for India. Some Indian communists cooperated with radical Congressmen at the annual Congress sessions in promoting the goal of complete independence. In addition, however, they advocated severance of the British link through the communist-organized and controlled Workers' and Peasants' Parties formed throughout India between 1923 and 1928. In December, 1928, the first all India Conference of Workers' and Peasants' Parties, convened in Calcutta under the presidency of the communist leader, Sohan Singh Josh, set as one of its ends the attainment by India of complete national independence.<sup>31</sup> In keeping with the instructions of the Sixth World Congress of the Communist International of September, 1928, the mass Workers' and Peasants' Parties merged with the illegal Communist Party of India during 1929<sup>32</sup> the effect of which was largely to emasculate communist influence on Indian opinion.

#### *The Proponents of Commonwealth Membership*

Within the Indian National Congress, the supporters of Commonwealth membership were led by Mahatma Gandhi, who 'like most English-educated Indians of his generation' favoured equal partnership within the Empire.<sup>33</sup> It was he who revised the Congress creed at the Nagpur session in December, 1920, to the goal of swaraj which he viewed as meaning responsible government with dominion status.

30 *The Statesman*, October 13, 18, 1937.

31 *The Indian National Herald*, December 24, 1928.

32 G. D. Overstreet, M. Windmiller, *Communism in India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959), pp. 114-21.

33 S.R. Mehrotra, *The Commonwealth and the Nation* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1978), p. 97.



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including the right to secede from the British Commonwealth.<sup>34</sup> Other prominent Congress supporters of the Commonwealth link included Motilal Nehru, Rajendra Prasad and Vallabhai Patel who was later to become independent India's first Deputy Prime Minister.

While the radical Congress opponents of the Commonwealth appeared superficially to have swung the Congress to an anti-Commonwealth policy in 1927 and 1929, the advocates of Commonwealth membership remained an important and powerful wing of the Congress. Their position was enhanced by the failure of the 1927 and 1929 independence resolutions to define precisely what was meant by complete independence. Accordingly, it was possible for the moderates to claim that the independence resolutions did not rule out commonwealth membership. It was conceivable, they argued, that India might obtain complete independence and fulfil the conditions of the resolutions while still remaining voluntarily within the structure of the Commonwealth. In years subsequent to the passing of the 1927 and 1929 resolutions, therefore, moderate Congressmen continued to assert that the Congress had not closed the door to permanent participation in the Commonwealth after independence. Since their numbers included Mahatma Gandhi, the unchallenged leader of the national movement, they successfully cast doubt on radicals' contention that 'complete independence' meant severance of the Commonwealth connection.

The change to the goal of complete independence did, however, force the moderates to harden somewhat their own attitude toward Commonwealth membership. Because of the 1929 complete independence resolution, the achievement of full and unfettered independence had to take precedence over considerations of the future relationship of India with Britain. Dominion status now became a goal that was acceptable only if it were clear that it in no way restricted the complete independence of India or indicated Indian condonation of imperialism. Indeed, in 1930, Gandhi for the first time tempered somewhat his own former enthusiasm for dominion status, arguing in the same way as the radicals that for India dominion status might not be commensurate with full national freedom — that it might not be granted to India on the same basis as in the white dominions.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>34</sup> *Report of the 35th Session of the Indian National Congress, Nagpur, 1920*, pp. 46-8, 85.

<sup>35</sup> See his letter to the Viceroy of March 2, 1930. D.G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma: Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi* (Bombay: Vithalbhai K. Jhaveri and D. G. Tendulkar, 1951-4) Vol. 3, p.19.



As sole representative of the Congress at the second Round Table Conference in London on constitutional reform, Gandhi was obligated to negotiate on the basis of the Lahore resolution on complete independence, reaffirmed at the Karachi Congress of March, 1931. In London, therefore, he placed greater emphasis on the attainment of complete independence than on the nature of the Commonwealth connection after responsible self-government had been obtained.<sup>36</sup> Further, he talked in terms of Indian 'partnership' with Britain after the attainment of independence rather than specifically of dominion status for India.<sup>37</sup>

The complete independence resolutions, therefore, had a considerable impact on the Congress moderates. Indeed, gradually from 1930 onward Gandhi at least moved closer to the position of the Congress radicals, to the extent that when, during the war, the British government offered India dominion status at the end of hostilities, Gandhi advised it to talk rather of independence.<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, moderate Congressmen, including Gandhi at heart, never abandoned their hope that some form of association with Britain would be preserved after independence, whether or not it took precisely the form of dominion status. Unlike Congress radicals, therefore, they never fully discarded the idea of Commonwealth membership after freedom had been achieved.

In addition to moderate Congressmen, Indian Liberals consistently supported membership of the Commonwealth from the inception of their India-wide organization, the National Liberal Federation of India in 1918, and unlike many Congressmen they never wavered from their adherence to the objective of dominion status.<sup>39</sup> Philosophically, Indian Liberals believed in moderation, evolution and the employment

<sup>36</sup> Indeed, on one occasion in England, Gandhi indicated his doubts about whether India would ever acquire dominion status on the same basis as the white dominions. See C. Rajagopalachari, J. C. Kumarappa, *The Nations Voice* (Ahmedabad: M.M. Bhatta, 1932), p. 130.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8, 81, 130, 192, 280. After the Conference, however, Gandhi reiterated his willingness to accept dominion status for India if it were offered on the same basis as in the dominions, so that it would be commensurate with full national independence and in keeping with the Lahore resolution on complete independence.

<sup>38</sup> V. P. Menon, *The Transfer of Power in India* (London: Longmans, 1957), p. 74.

<sup>39</sup> For a detailed account of Liberal attitudes to the Commonwealth upto 1929, see Mehrotra, *India and the Commonwealth*, pp.148-78.



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of constitutional means for the achievement of political objectives and, hence with faith in the liberality of the British, they believed that independence could be obtained within the structure of the Empire through gradual political reform. Emotionally, they were wedded to British institutions — to the British parliamentary educational and legal systems — and to the social mores of Britain and, thus, they genuinely desired to preserve a relationship which in their opinion had bestowed manifold benefits on the sub-continent. Accordingly, some Liberals were even prepared to participate in the Imperial Conferences despite the British control of Indian delegations. Moreover, before 1928, the Federation did not demand the immediate establishment of self-government in India, but only rapid evolution to dominion status. However, by 1928, the Liberals, conscious of growing restiveness in the nation, began to call for immediate self-government on the same basis as in the dominions, though subject to certain limitations during a period of transfer. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, in moving the resolution on dominion status at the 1928 annual session of the Federation, said that any future delay in the establishment of self-government was likely to be fraught with danger, since determination to work within the existing political arrangements was dissipating.<sup>40</sup> In 1930, the Liberals carried their new demand into the Council of State where Sir Phirose Sethna introduced a resolution calling for the immediate granting of dominion status to India except for interim limitations.<sup>41</sup>

The liberals were profoundly dissatisfied with the British Government's proposals for constitutional reform as embodied in a March, 1933 Government White Paper, and with the reforms eventually enacted in the India Act of 1935, since they did not confer dominion status. Accordingly, the 1933 and 1935 annual Liberal conferences criticized the reform measures as inadequate.<sup>42</sup> Yet, despite increasing impatience with the pace of constitutional change, the Liberals never deserted the idea of Commonwealth membership for India on the basis of dominion status.

Support for the Commonwealth was also forthcoming from the majority of Indian Muslim leaders. Although Muslim India's traditional loyalty to Britain and the Commonwealth bond was persistently

40 *Indian Quarterly Register*, 2 (1928), 386.

41 India, Council of State Debates, 2 (July 10, 1930):48-84.

42 *Indian Annual Register*, 1 (1933): 440-3; 2 (1925): 288-9.



challenged after 1921 by the pan-Islamists and leftist ideologues in the Muslim League, the prominent leaders of the organization, including Mohammad Ali Jinnah, Muhammad Shafi, Sir Ali Imam and the Raja of Mahmudabad, always remained wedded to the Commonwealth idea. In 1928, for example, the day after the All India Khilafat Conference renewed its support for complete independence, the Raja of Mahmudabad, in an address to the Calcutta session of the bifurcated Muslim League, said that 'the application of the doctrine of independence in the sense of the severance of the British connection' was a 'hopelessly unworkable proposition' and that 'India's place in the Commonwealth' was one of 'undeniable security.'<sup>43</sup> Most Muslims also supported a draft national Indian constitution, prepared by Motilal Nehru for an All-Parties Conference in 1928, in so far as it recommended that the Indian goal be set at dominion status.<sup>44</sup> The Muslim disenchantment with the joint attempt at drafting a suitable constitution for an independent India, which was evident at the All-Parties Muslim Conference in December, 1928,<sup>45</sup> stemmed not from differences over India's future relationship with the Commonwealth, but over the report's attitude to communal representation. Further, Muslim Leaguers demonstrated their attachment to the Commonwealth by cooperating at the constitutional Round Table Conference in London in 1931, thereby indicating once again their willingness to settle for dominion status.

The Muslim League, however, did not pass any resolutions declaring its attitude toward the Commonwealth until the ambiguous resolution of 1937, and consequently it is only possible to assess Muslim views of the Commonwealth on the basis of individual opinions. However, from the public statements of prominent Muslims it is apparent that most of the important leaders supported Commonwealth membership throughout the decades leading to independence. In an interview in January, 1930, Khan Bahadur Sheikh Abdullah reflected the prevailing Muslim view about the Commonwealth when he said:

The Mohammedans stand for Dominion Status and there is a general discontentment with the new move of independence as a goal. No Musalman with the exception of a few

<sup>43</sup> *Indian Quarterly Register*, 2 (1928): 395.

<sup>44</sup> See *The Statesman*, Aug. 30, 1928: *Indian Quarterly Register*, 2 (1928): 409-26.

<sup>45</sup> *Indian Quarterly Register*, 2 (1928): 409-17.



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irresponsible Muslims can accept independence as the future goal for India . . . The Musalmans do not want to sever their connection with the British Empire. This they want not in the interests of the British bureaucracy or British capitalism but in the interests of the seventy millions of Muslim inhabitants of this country. If Great Britain will faithfully carry out its pledges to India and place our motherland on the same level as the other self-governing members of the Empire, the Musalmans will never desire to go out of the great Empire.<sup>46</sup>

Although the dynamic Muslim League session of October, 1937, bowed to the demand of Muslim radicals that the League's goal be changed to 'full independence,' the League still did not reject the idea of Commonwealth membership. Indeed, in his presidential address to the session, Mohammed Ali Jinnah derided the Congress demand of complete independence and asserted that those who talked the most of complete independence knew the least what it meant.<sup>47</sup> His words were evidently meant as a caution to those Muslims desirous of committing the League to a definition of independence that ruled out Commonwealth membership.

To Muslims, fearful of the possible repercussions of eventual Hindu majority rule in the subcontinent, the Congress demand of immediate, complete independence, both before and during World War II, posed a potential threat. A peaceful, constitutional evolution to dominion status, during which time the political interests of the community could be safely entrenched, appealed to most Muslims as in the best interests of the community.

Moderate Congressmen and Indian Liberals differed in their attitude toward the Commonwealth most markedly in that the Liberals, with the exception of Srinivasa Sastri, were unreservedly committed to dominion status for India regardless of whether or not India's right to secede was recognized,<sup>48</sup> while moderate Congressmen always insisted that India's right to sever the relationship at will must be acknowledged. For the Liberals, loyalty to Britain and the Commonwealth

46 *The Star* (Allahabad), January 13, 1930.

47 *Indian Annual Register*, 2 (1937): 403.

48 For Sastri's dissenting view, see *The Bengalee* (Calcutta), July 23, 1930.



was a foremost consideration, while for moderate Congressmen India's attainment of undiluted independence was the first priority. To the Liberals, the objective of dominion status for India was an inviolable principle, while to moderate Congressmen acceptance of dominion status depended on the nature of the term when applied to India. However, despite these differences, moderate Congressmen, Liberals, and on occasions Muslims, too, propounded similar arguments for India's accepting dominion status and thus retaining Commonwealth membership.

The most common argument proffered by the advocates of Commonwealth membership in support of their cause was that dominion status in its true sense was for all intents and purposes the same as complete independence, particularly after the Balfour Committee Report of 1926.<sup>49</sup> For example, the Congress leader, Rajendra Prasad, wrote in 1929 that 'precisely the same amount of effort and sacrifice' would be required for the attainment of either dominion status or complete independence, and consequently there was 'no practical difference between the two.' Dominion status, he said, meant nothing less than a partnership at will with the other parts of the British Commonwealth, dissoluble at will.<sup>50</sup> Under such circumstances, the supporters of the Commonwealth felt that a demand for immediate dominion status was 'more beneficial than a mere cry for Independence.' 'To vigilantly fight for the substance steering clear of the mirage of independence,' they argued, would be the better part of statesmanship, 'and that way should the whole nation concentrate its efforts.'<sup>51</sup>

Moderate Indians also argued that the only way to achieve unity among the Indian political organizations was to set the goal at dominion status, since it was the maximum demand on which all were agreed, and the only basis on which the native states could be induced to unite with the rest of India.<sup>52</sup> In addition, the supporters of dominion status

49 *Indian Quarterly Register*, 1 (1928): 107-8, 112; B. C. Pal, 'Dominion Status v. Isolated Independence,' *The Hindustan Review* (January-March, 1929): 44-5; C.V.H. Rao, 'Dominion Status and its Implications,' *Triveni*, 3, no. 3 (May-June 1930): 29.

50 R. Prasad, "Back to Non-Cooperation" Our Slogan,' *The Hindustan Review* (September, 1929): 215.

51 K.L.R. Sastry, 'Dominion Status and India,' *The Indian Review*, 31, no. 4 (April, 1930): 244.

52 *The Hindu Weekly*, December 29, 1927; *Indian Quarterly Register*, 2 (1929), 323; *The Hindustan Review* (February, 1930): 190.



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felt that complete independence probably could not be achieved without resort to violence, while dominion status might be obtained by peaceful evolution.<sup>53</sup> To men of moderate political bent who were opposed to the use of force either because they adhered to the principle of non-violence or because they believed in gradual constitutional change, this was a persuasive argument in favour of seeking dominion status. Further, they felt that a resort to violence and a demand for complete independence would alienate support in liberal circles in Britain and perhaps retard the ultimate achievement of Indian freedom.<sup>54</sup>

Finally, many Indians, particularly members of the Liberal Federation and the Muslim League, argued in favour of dominion status on the grounds that India 'if she insisted upon complete independence, would be at the mercy of some other invading nation,' that 'she would have Japan, China, Russia, or the tribes of Central Asia overrunning her.'<sup>55</sup> They asserted that dominion status was a more practical goal, since under the existing state of Indian defences it would be unsafe to give up the protection afforded by Britain to the members of the Empire.<sup>56</sup> 'India's defence inevitably relies on the United Kingdom, however much some may dislike,' wrote the Liberal, Sir A. P. Patro, in 1938. 'It is an advantage for the present to share in the system of "Collective Protection" or "Partnership" until we are able to defend ourselves.'<sup>57</sup>

Thus, Indian moderates advocated retention of the Commonwealth link largely on the basis of practical domestic considerations, rather than because they regarded the Commonwealth as a potentially valuable international institution. However, there were occasional indications among the supporters of the British Commonwealth of an interest in the organization because of its possible international importance rather than because of its immediate benefits to India. Those who foresaw an

53 L. R. Rai, 'Political Independence Versus Dominion Status for India,' *The Hindustan Review* (January-March, 1929): 25; *The Bengalee*, February 27, 1930.

54 *The Bengalee*, February 27, 1930.

55 A. Besant, 'India Demands Justice', *The Indian Review*, 32, no. 7 (July, 1931): 398-9.

56 See *Indian Quarterly Register*, 2 (1928): 395; *Indian Annual Register*, 2 (1937): 371; 2 (1938): 360, 366.

57 A. P. Patro, 'India's Defence Problem,' *The Twentieth Century*, 5 (October 1938): 60.



international function for the Commonwealth after the attainment of Indian freedom were most interested in its possibilities as a bridge among the races. Following the liquidation of British imperialism, they envisaged the perpetuation among the independent parts of the Empire of a harmonious inter-racial association which, by overcoming one of the greatest sources of international tension — racial animosity —, could make an important contribution to the achievement of world unity and peace. Rather than regarding the racial and cultural differences of the Empire members as irreconcilable, as did many of the supporters of complete independence, they felt that the multi-racial nature of the British Commonwealth, which made it a microcosm of the heterogeneous international community, meant that membership was a challenge that should be willingly accepted for the sake of fostering global harmony. In 1931, C. R. Reddy wrote:

Vast historical unities that bring together different races, creeds and cultures and promote fecund intercourse, should not be broken up. If we are strong enough for independence, we are *a fortiori* strong enough for Dominion Status which combines the advantages of separation and combination. From the point of view universal humanity, our cry for Independence is another form of communalism. With India as a Dominion, the Empire will become an epoch-making stage in the federation of the world.<sup>58</sup>

Pandit Hriday Nath Kunzru, speaking in Australia at the second British Commonwealth Relations Conference in 1938, felt that the value of the Conference and, hence, of the Commonwealth lay in the fact that it was composed of not merely the people of one race or culture, but 'of different races, languages, cultures and economic interests.' The Commonwealth members, he said, 'could demonstrate by their actions and by the unity' that they were able to achieve among themselves 'that peace and goodwill' were 'within the reach of the world at large,' provided it chose the same path which the Commonwealth had followed.<sup>59</sup> Mahatma Gandhi, too, believed that the Commonwealth could be of great moral service to the international community if, as he said at the

<sup>58</sup> C.R.Reddy, *Articles on Round Table Conference and Other Addresses* (Madras: Modern Book Mart, 1931), p. 66. See also V. S. Sastri, *Speeches and Writings of the Rt. Hon. V.S. Srinivasa Sastri* (Madras: G. A. Natesan, 1924) pp. 250-1.

<sup>59</sup> *The Modern Review*, 64, no. 11 (November, 1938): 530.



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second Round Table Conference in London, its members were tied together by no other bond than 'the silken cord of love.'<sup>60</sup> Thus, in the pre-independence period, there were some Indians who envisaged a future international role for the Commonwealth similar to what that organization aspires to achieve today.

*Significance of Congress Ambivalence for Later Membership*

Pakistan's post-independence decision in favour of Commonwealth membership followed naturally from the position of the Muslim League during the nationalist struggle. In the case of India, the determination of its future policy toward the Commonwealth was bound to depend upon the ultimate decision of the Indian National Congress, the premier political organization in nationalist India. It is significant, therefore, that in the debate between dominion status and complete independence the Congress never fully discarded the possibility of Commonwealth membership despite the apparent victories of the advocates of complete independence and severance of the Commonwealth bond. For example, the resolution passed in 1927 which declared the Congress's goal to be complete independence represented only a superficial and ambiguous commitment to severance of the British connection, since it did not define what was meant by complete independence. Gandhi, while he regarded the resolution as 'hastily conceived and thoughtlessly passed,' nonetheless, claimed that 'its wording was harmless' and did not alter the goal of the Congress.<sup>61</sup> Other moderate Indians shared his conviction and many supporters of dominion status did not, therefore, oppose the 1927 resolution, since they felt that 'complete independence' was the same as dominion status, including the right to secede, as the Congress had previously demanded.<sup>62</sup> The presidential address of Dr. M.A. Ansari to the Madras Congress also indicated that many Congressmen still adhered to the traditional interpretation of the Indian political goal:

Indians do not claim anything more or less than that they shall occupy the same position and enjoy the same rights in their country as free people do in their own. If this can be achieved within the Empire they have no desire to break away from it but if the Imperial connection stands in the way of our

60 Rajagopalachari and Kumarappa, p.9. See also Mehrotra, *The Commonwealth and the Nation*, p.107.

61 *Young India* (Ahmedabad), January 5, 12, 1928.

62 *The Hindu Weekly*, December 29, 1927.



reaching the goal, we should not hesitate to sever the connection. Our motto in the words of Mahatma Gandhi, should be 'within the Empire, if possible, without if necessary.'<sup>63</sup>

During 1928 the Congress further mitigated the significance of the Madras resolution by cooperating with other political organizations in the preparation of a draft constitution for an independent India that set the Indian goal at the establishment of self-government on the same model as the dominions.<sup>64</sup> Further, at the Calcutta Congress, in December, 1928, in keeping with the draft constitution of the All-Parties Constitutional Committee, the Congress, at Gandhi's urging, reverted to the demand of dominion status, provided the British Government accepted the draft constitution on or before 31 December 1929.<sup>65</sup>

Before the expiry of the one-year Congress ultimatum, the British Government announced its proposal to convene a constitutional Round Table Conference in London to discuss the next stage of political reform in India, but since the Government would not provide a guarantee that the Conference would consider the preparation of a constitution granting dominion status, the Congress at its Lahore session in December, 1929, reverted to the demand for complete independence.<sup>66</sup> However, an attempt made by the radical, Subhas Bose, to include in the resolution a statement that complete independence meant severance of the British connection was defeated by the Congress.<sup>67</sup> Thus, at Lahore the advocates of complete independence obtained the satisfaction of a paper victory for their cause, while the supporters of the Commonwealth remained at liberty to interpret the resolution as they liked.

Following the expiry of the one-year ultimatum of dominion status, the Congress resorted to non-co-operation in 1930. This second

<sup>63</sup> *Congress Presidential Address, Second Series* (Madras: G. A. Natesan, 1934-5), pp. 824-5.

<sup>64</sup> *All Parties Conference, 1928*. Report of the Committee appointed by the Conference to determine the principles of the Constitution for India (Allahabad: All India Congress Committee, 1928): pp.1, 24-5.

<sup>65</sup> *Indian Quarterly Register*, 2 (1928): 29-53, 359-68.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 2 (1929): 300.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 302. Even Bose on occasion did not rule out the possibility of a continuing relationship with Britain once India had obtained independence. See Shantilal Kothari, *India's Emerging Foreign Policies* (Bombay: Vora, 1951), p. 88.



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major non-co-operation movement ended the following year with the signing of the famous Gandhi-Irwin Pact. At its Karachi session in March, 1931, the Congress endorsed the settlement by passing a resolution in which it agreed to 'work for' the convening of another Round Table Conference in London with the object of drafting a constitution granting independence to India including the right to secede from the British Commonwealth at will.<sup>68</sup> Thus, the Congress indicated once again its willingness to settle for something less than severance of the British tie provided that the choice to remain within the Commonwealth was left completely voluntary.

In his presidential address to the Karachi Congress, Vallabhbhai Patel confirmed the readiness of the Congress to remain in the Commonwealth when he said of the Gandhi-Irwin pact:

There is no receding from the Lahore resolution of complete independence. This independence does not mean — was not intended to mean — a churlish refusal to associate with Britain or any other power. Independence, therefore, does not exclude the possibility of equal partnership for mutual benefit ... dissolvable at the will of either party.<sup>69</sup>

While at the second Round Table Conference in London, Gandhi, as sole delegate for the Congress, disclosed doubts about India's achieving dominion status, he still said following the collapse of the Conference that he hoped that some day after the disintegration of the British Empire, its independent units would all 'be tied to each other voluntarily for the good of mankind.'<sup>70</sup> On his return to India, a Congress Working Committee meeting, convened in Bombay on the eve of renewed non-cooperation, left open the possibility of cooperation with the British once again if the ordinances recently enacted in India were withdrawn and if the British Government agreed to negotiate Indian Independence with the Congress at a definite future date.<sup>71</sup> Thus, the Congress leadership disclosed that it remained willing to confer with the British and apparently settle for something less than severance of the British connection. This was even more apparent in 1934 when the Congress Working Committee, in attempting to dispel persisting doubts

68 *Indian Annual Register*, 1, (1931): 269-74.

69 *Congress Presidential Addresses*, pp. 906-7.

70 *The Times of India* (Bombay), January 1, 1932.

71 *The Leader*, January 3, 1932.



about the organization's political goal, clearly indicated the possibility of future Indian membership of the Commonwealth on a voluntary basis. The Working Committee said:

Misgivings have risen in the minds of some Congressmen and others that the Congress goal of Poorna Swaraj or Complete Independence is being imperceptibly watered down . . . Poorna Swaraj includes unfettered national control among other things, over the army and other defence forces, external affairs fiscal and commercial matters, financial and economic policy. A free India should have the freedom to make its choice between voluntary partnership with the British and complete separation.<sup>72</sup>

The Congress made no further attempt to define Swaraj until 1940 so that although the organization remained committed to complete independence, the possibility of Commonwealth membership, if it did not conflict with Indian freedom, was not rejected. The Congress decision in 1937 to form ministries in the provinces under the India Act of 1935 represented another dilution of the demand for complete independence. In 1937, Gandhi stated once more that if dominion status were offered to him in terms of the Statute of Westminster with the right to secede at will, he 'would unhesitatingly accept it.'<sup>73</sup> Further, in May, 1939, he said that independence did not preclude 'partnership between the two nations enjoying equal independent status and terminable by either at will,' nor necessarily exclude dominion status for India, if the term were applied elastically.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>72</sup> *Indian Annual Register*, 2 (1934): 203.

<sup>73</sup> Quoted in V.S.R. Sastri, 'Dominion Status, the War and India,' *The Indian Review*, 40, no. 12 (December 1939): 774.

<sup>74</sup> Tendulkar, Vol. V, pp. 137-8. In 1940, however, Gandhi rejected dominion status for India. He wrote in March of that year that 'maturer reflection' had led to think that dominion status on the Westminster model could not suit India's case. *Ibid.*, p. 315. However, he still did not rule out the possibility of a future association with Britain, for he said in June, 1940, that he felt dominion status would be myth at the end of the war and Britain would be a completely different country. Gandhi argued simply that 'India's immediate objective must be unadulterated independence.' *Ibid.*, p. 362.



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The general resolution of the Ramgarh session in March, 1940, seemed to support the view of the opponents of the Commonwealth since it declared:

Nothing short of complete Independence can be accepted by the people of India. Indian freedom cannot exist within the orbit of Imperialism; and Dominion Status or any other status within the imperial structure is wholly inapplicable to India, is not in keeping with the dignity of a great nation, and would bind India in many ways to British politics and economic structure.<sup>75</sup>

However, it was still not clear that the Congress had completely rejected the idea of future Commonwealth membership, for the resolution only rejected dominion status 'within the imperial structure,' leaving open the possibility of some kind of connection with the Commonwealth when its imperialist basis dissolved. Prof. N. Srinivasan, for example, wrote of the resolution: 'There is here no tyranny of phrases clouding the real issues, and no rejection of Dominion Status conceived as it truly ought to be.'<sup>76</sup> Indeed, at a subjects' committee meeting at the Ramgarh session, the Congress defeated an attempt by M.N. Roy to include a paragraph in the general resolution stating that the object of the Indian National Congress was 'the attainment of complete independence, thereby meaning unconditional severance of all relations with the British Empire.'<sup>77</sup> Thus, it remained uncertain whether the verbal victory of the supporters of complete independence would in the end be transferred into a reality.

Doubt about the Congress's adherence to complete independence was augmented by the ambiguity in the outlook of Jawaharlal Nehru, whose point of view was destined to be of great importance when nationalist India was finally in a position to determine the nature of its post-independence international commitments. While Nehru was the mover of the complete independence resolution of 1929, a founding member of the Indian Independence League and a frequent public proponent of complete independence, nonetheless, he temporized on a

<sup>75</sup> *The Leader*, March 19, 1940.

<sup>76</sup> N. Srinivasan. 'The Congress and the Constitution,' *Triveni*, 13, no. 1 (July-Sept., 1940): 10-11.

<sup>77</sup> *The Leader*, March 20, 1948.



number of occasions, between 1928 and 1931 in particular. For example, he imposed silence on himself over Gandhi's compromise resolution on independence at the 1928 Calcutta Congress;<sup>78</sup> signed the Yeravada Jail letter of August, 1930, agreeing to negotiations to end non-cooperation if Britain, *inter alia*, recognized the right of India to secede from the British Empire;<sup>79</sup> and moved the Congress resolution of March, 1931, endorsing the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, a resolution which accepted the idea of dominion status under specific conditions.<sup>80</sup> Further, in many of the speeches he delivered in favour of complete independence, he managed to leave open the possibility of cooperation in the Commonwealth. At the subjects' committee meeting of the Madras Congress, for example, Nehru said of his resolution on complete independence:

It does not signify, it does not mean that you or this committee have necessarily ill-will for England or the British connection. But, before you consider this question of British connection it is essential that this country should be perfectly free and then it should be in a position to decide whether and how far it is desirable to enter the British group of nations or be in line with that group.<sup>81</sup>

At the Delhi Provincial Congress in October, 1928, Nehru even suggested that India's future association might take the form of dominion status, but that the decision about the relationship would have to come after independence when there would be no pressure on India to maintain the British tie.<sup>82</sup> Again, in 1933, he wrote that if British imperialism were abandoned, India would 'gladly cooperate' with Britain 'in the wider international field; not otherwise.'<sup>83</sup> Even as late as 1940, during the debate on Ramgarh resolution, Nehru said that although dominion status for India on the Statute of Westminster model was impractical, he was not opposed to 'friendly connections' with Britain based on mutual equality.<sup>84</sup> Thus, Nehru often manifested a

78 Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography* (Bombay: Allied, 1962), p. 186; *Indian Quarterly Register*, 2 (1928): 38.

79 *Indian Annual Register*, 2 (1930): 89.

80 *Ibid.*, 1 (1931): 268-9.

81 *The Hindu Weekly*, Dec. 29, 1927.

82 *Indian Quarterly Register*, 2 (1928): 440.

83 Jawaharlal Nehru, 'Whither India?' *The Leader*, October 15, 1933. See also: Nehru, *India and the World*, p. 234; *An Autobiography*, pp. 583-4.

84 *The Leader*, March 19, 1940.



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willingness to consider a voluntary international relationship with Britain, acknowledging possibility of Commonwealth membership if the association were one of equality and free of imperialist connotations.

While it is true that many of Nehru's statements, especially later, conflicted with the moderate outlook of others,<sup>85</sup> it is important to note that the most bitterly anti-Commonwealth speeches were delivered during years of frustration in the face of the failure of the Round Table Conferences, the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Constitutional Reform, the India Act of 1935 and war-time negotiations to satisfy the political aspirations of the Congress. They were usually also delivered during years in which there were no new negotiations under way with the British Government and when, therefore, pessimism and resentment were high. Since Nehru modified his position in the period 1928-1931 when it appeared possible that the Congress might wrest its demands from the British by negotiation, there was reason to expect that if and when meaningful talks about independence were resumed, Nehru might once more alter his viewpoint regarding Commonwealth membership. This, in fact, proved the case, for after the war, in the months preceding the transfer of power, there was 'a gradual but discernible trend in his thinking towards the maintenance of friendly relations with Britain and the Commonwealth.'<sup>86</sup>

Finally, the position of the opponents of the Commonwealth link inevitably lacked finality, for the advocates of complete independence attempted to decide what India's future relationship with the Commonwealth should be on the basis of its existing character. So long as India lacked freedom, it was understandably difficult for nationalist Indians either to consider or comprehend hypothetical future circumstances in which they might be able to revise their negative image of the British Empire, and in which free and equal partnership in a Commonwealth differently conceived, might be acceptable. A meaningful decision about the Commonwealth could, therefore, only be taken when political independence was imminent and membership could be rightly assessed in terms of India's domestic and international interests, rather than on the basis of its implications for the political status of India.

The decision to grant independence to the sub-continent in August, 1947, created circumstances in which the opponents of the

85 See Nehru, *Eighteen Months in India*, p.117; *The Unity of India*, p. 389.

86 Mehrotra, *The Commonwealth and the Nation*, p. 115.



Commonwealth could reconsider their position. Since it was to be left to Indians themselves to decide voluntarily whether or not to adhere to the Commonwealth, it was clear that membership would not entail inferiority of status, but would simply represent a decision to enter into a specific international relationship. Further, the attainment of full independence by the sub-continent reflected the recession of British imperialism and the transformation of the character of the Commonwealth, since by the reasoning of nationalist Indians themselves British imperialism hinged on the subjection of India and was bound to pass with the achievement of independence by the sub-continent.<sup>87</sup> Thus, many of the arguments adduced against the Commonwealth were invalidated by the British decision to withdraw, making it possible for Indians to reconsider views adopted under the depressing circumstances of dependence.<sup>88</sup> It was not surprising, therefore, despite the pre-independence legacy of opposition to the Commonwealth, that in the altered conditions and environment after August, 1947, India opted to stay in the Commonwealth, thereby facilitating like decisions by other British colonies over the years that followed.

87 See for example, Dwivedi, pp. 43, 85; Nehru in *The Statesman*, Sept. 1, 1928; Srinivasa Iyengar in *The Statesman*, Sept. 5, 1928.

88 For an examination of the ultimate decision and the arguments proffered after 1947 in favour of Commonwealth membership, see in particular Sarvepalli Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru, A Biography* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1979), Vol. II, pp. 46-54. Apart from being aided by the presence of a Labour government in the United Kingdom, the decision was doubtless facilitated by the fact that by the time it was taken in 1949, there had been almost two years of Indian freedom, during which the country's complete independence as a member of the Commonwealth had become manifest to all by its significant departures in foreign policy from Britain. See Y. Nasenko, *Jawaharlal Nehru and India's Foreign Policy* (New Delhi: Sterling, 1977), pp. 62-6. Nehru had also had an opportunity to participate in the Commonwealth Conference of 1948 and that served to enhance his appreciation of the benefits of continuing membership, Mehrotra, *The Commonwealth and the Nation*, p. 118.



## Reviews

### ECONOMIC CONDITIONS IN KARNATAKA, A.D. 973—A.D. 1336

—by G. R. Kuppuswamy. Published by Karnatak University, Dharwar, 1975, pp. 231, Price: Rs. 24/-

The present work represents an attempt to study the economic life of the people of Karnataka during the early part of the medieval period. It covers four centuries from the decline of the Rashtrakutas to the rise of Vijayanagar. The title given to the work does not sound impressive, yet the contents on land system, crop pattern, taxation, industry, and commerce are of particular interest.

The source material on a subject of this kind is not only limited but also scattered. Yet G. R. Kuppuswamy consulted the available sources, both inscriptional and literary, and collected the relevant data with considerable care. This has enabled him to render documentation as perfect as possible. It is clear that he has analysed the entire material with skill and presented it in a discussion like method. The language is readable and the views in general are balanced. The author deserves credit for making an original and significant contribution of historical scholarship on economic life in medieval Karnataka.

However, it cannot be denied that the work reflects upon many of the short comings that are inherent in the sources and influences of traditional writing. Most of the inscriptions and literary works of the times deal with temples and higher castes and leave out the common people. This limitation, serious as it is, had forced Dr. Kuppuswamy to make his work temple-*agrahara* oriented. In p.32 he refers to the blood shed caused by the royal take-over of the villages to be gifted away to the Brahmins. Events of similar nature are mentioned in the Tamil ballad, *Kongu Desa Rajakkal* too. But it becomes an anachronism, when the author depicts such donations of other people's land as philanthropic on the part of the king, as is done in p.16. Yet the foot notes in the work furnish clues for a study of the donations and gifts made by the rulers from an angle different from what is conventional.



The standard of living of the people is discussed, but it is made so general that in the absence of a class or caste wise approach nothing specific has been made out. The statements that the wages given to temple priests suggest that inequality of income was relatively absent (p. 179) and "In general cheap living was assured by low prices, customs and conventions and absence of speculation" (p. 185) appear misleading. For, in foot note 153, Chapter VI, he refers to the miserable and pathetic existence of the common people bordering on servitude while royalty and nobility lived in luxury. (p. 191). Further, the observation: the innumerable number of taxes levied on goods point out that capital was not kept idle or blocked (p. 181) is of doubtful validity.

Nevertheless the work represents a painstaking study, while the foot notes give scope for much more of an interpretative analysis. The statistics, illustrations and glossary add to the value of the work.

K. RAJAYYAN

ORISSA LEGISLATURE AND FREEDOM STRUGGLE, 1942-47  
—by Kishori Mohan Patra. Published by the I. C. H. R., 1979;  
pp. 1-311, Price: Rs. 48/-

The volume under review is a welcome addition to the series projected by the I.C.H.R. to analyse the role of provincial legislatures in India's fight for freedom. This is actually the third work in the series, ably tackled by an upcoming progressive scholar of Orissa. Being a sort of link in the chain, this work follows essentially the main format formulated for the project. Only local variations give a slight differentiating turn to the pattern to make it meaningful in the conditions prevailing in Orissa between 1912 and 1947.

It is quite well known that India's fight for freedom in the present century had taken place on two planes — through mass movements and through a constitutional struggle in the legislative bodies against the repressive policies of the government. Needless to say that these two were complementary to each other. In the case of Orissa the story takes off from 1912 when after the annulment of the Bengal partition, Orissa and Bihar were severed to form a separate politico-administrative unit.



However, the separate identity of Orissa as a province came only after the Government of India Act of 1935, though the demand for a separate province of Orissa was voiced long ago. Thus, the author has tried to show how Orissa had to fight on two fronts — one for the emancipation of the country under the leadership of the Congress and the other for establishing the separate administrative and political identity. Moreover, as the writer very correctly narrated, the struggle for emancipation in Orissa was not complete until all the *Garjat* (feudatory) states were merged in the main body-politic by 1949. The entire story has been recounted in seven readable chapters written in a lucid style.

Very logically, Dr. Patra has started his account by tracing the growth of national consciousness in Orissa (Chap.1) wherein he projected the backdrop of the main fight that started in 1912. However, there is a vital gap in the chapter. The author is totally silent about Orissa's response to the Partition of Bengal and the consequent anti-partition agitation. On the other hand, the author made a significant remark that "the people of Orissa did not get the benefit of Lord Curzon's sympathetic attitude in this matter" (p.15), which actually referred to the proposed territorial readjustment in Bengal involving the boundary of Orissa, as outlined in the famous Risely Circular of 1903. Perhaps, Dr. Patra gave more importance to the appearance and failed to grasp the real objective of Curzon vis-a-vis the nationalists of the erstwhile province of Bengal. Hence, Curzon appeared to him as having sympathetic attitude towards the people of Orissa. Undoubtedly, the same disappointment lingered after 1912 when Orissa was tagged to Bihar.

After looking into the working of the Council Government of the composite province from 1912 to 1920 and the working of the dyarchy between 1921 and 1936 (Chap.2), the author assessed the achievements of the Congress Ministry and X'rayed the working of the provincial autonomy during 1937-39 (Chap. 3). In this chapter he has shown how the Congress Ministry won several battles against the ruling British authority and introduced several progressive socio-economic reforms through legislations which struck at the roots of the age old feudal systems in Orissa. True to the tune of the National Congress, the Ministry in Orissa resigned in 1939 on the War issue. Unfortunately, a serious rift in the Congress party in Orissa surfaced at that stage and the politics of defection gained a temporary reward when a non-Congress coalition Ministry was installed in office which continued to function till the end of 1944 (Chap. 4). It was but natural that such a ministry



could not function effectively, and it was plagued by the rising tide of mass movement under the 'Quit India' programme of Gandhiji on the one hand and the deepening food crisis on the other. The only positive achievement during this phase was the establishment of Utkal University under the Act of 1943. The Congress was again in the saddle of power at the end of the War and it continued through the trying years before Independence (Chap. 5). It was during this period that "a firm foundation was laid for the development projects in various fields" (p. 293). The dream of a "United Utkal" was realised at the end of 1948 through the merger of the feudatory States (Chap. 6) as a direct consequence of the 'Praja Mandal' movement. In the concluding chapter, the author has just made a summary of his views expressed in several chapters.

On the whole, the author has given us a complete story of the constitutional side of the struggle in Orissa interspersed with the reflections of the political struggle that was going on in the country for the achievement of freedom. At the end, only one word about the documentation: the records of the Government of India in the Legislative Department have not all been tapped, and they could have given the author corroborative evidences in many cases. The reviewer is, however, unable to explain this vital gap in the documentation of the work.

TARASANKAR BANERJEE

A CONCORDANCE OF THE NAMES IN THE CŌĻA INSCRIPTIONS—by Noburu Karashima, Y. Subbarayalu, Toru Matsui, Vol. I and II — *List of Names*; Vol. III — *Index to Segments*. Published by Sarvodaya Ilakkiya Pannai, Madurai, 1978; Price: Rs. 105/- per set.

Paucity of records is often the bane of a historian working on any aspect of the early Indian history; but for those who work on early south Indian history — particularly the ChōĻa history — the problem is happily just the opposite. It is the staggering quantity of source of materials — particularly inscriptions — which run into thousands that poses a formidable challenge to the researcher seeking to study any aspect of the ChōĻa history. Professor K. A. Nilakanta Sastri's *magnum opus*, *The CōĻas* (2nd edition, 1955) was a grand pioneering effort to systematize the mass of details culled from thousands of ChōĻa



records and to present a coherent picture of south Indian history during the Chōḷa times. Despite the fact that *The Cōḷas* still remains the most authoritative work on the subject, quite a few scholars in recent years have ventured to question some of Sastri's formulations and have even suggested alternative hypotheses to explain the polity and society under the Chōḷas.

In the opinion of the authors of *The Concordance* under review, all attempts carried out so far (Sastri not excluded) to study the socio-economic aspects of the Chōḷa period on the basis of inscriptional evidences are "quite unsatisfactory for the simple reason that their method in the usage of inscriptions has been quite arbitrary" (Vol. I, p. ix). Therefore the arguments as well as conclusions are of doubtful validity. "What then the authors feel is (sic) necessary, is that statistical methods should be applied to the study of the inscription which would be the only way to develop the study further, overcoming at the same time the difficulty which past studies have encountered" (Vol. I, p. ix - x). This view led Professor N. Karashima and Dr. Y. Subbarayalu to launch a joint project in 1973 to compile and study the personal names found in the Chōḷa Tamil inscriptions, and *The Concordance* is the outcome of the same. Though the principal object of the project has been "to analyse the information given by the names and designation of persons collected from almost all the published Cōḷa Tamil inscriptions with the view of clarifying the administrative and social system of the period", the authors are of the opinion that *The Concordance* "would be serviceable not only for historical studies but also for other studies such as sociological, linguistic ones and so on" (Vol. I, p. x.)

Volume I and II of *The Concordance* contain 9,590 names of persons with related information collected from 3,168 inscriptions which are found in seven districts viz., Nellore, Chittoor (both in Andhra Pradesh), Chengalpattu (Chingleput), North Arcot, South Arcot, Thanjavur and Tiruchirappalli (all in Tamilnadu). The related information on each name is given in the text in abbreviated forms and code numbers which have been fully explained in an Appendix (No. 1). The names of persons, wherever possible, have been segmented into (1) the



village name (2) the gotra or its equivalent (3) the father's name (4) the individual's given-name (5) the individual's title. Volume III contains the index to each of these segments.

The authors have knowingly not taken into consideration a good number of Chōla inscriptions found in areas outside the seven districts mentioned above, because of their wish to confine the "study of the Cola bureaucracy to the Cola country proper i.e., Colamandalam and Jayankondacolamandalam, the extent of which corresponds roughly to that of the seven districts mentioned above" (Vol. I, p. xv, f.n.) It may, however, be pointed out that the study of Chōla bureaucracy outside the core region is also equally important to understand the process of expansion of the Chōla political power over the conquered territories.

At the initial stage the two authors who launched the project, used hole-sort cards for collecting and arranging the data and subsequently, on the suggestion of Toru Matsui who also joined the project, a computer was pressed into service for data processing. In the meantime, two interim reports — one in Japanese and the other in English — were published by Karashima and Subbarayalu in the *Computational Analysis of Asian and African Languages*, No. 1 (1975) and No. 3 (1976) respectively and the report in English has been reprinted in Vol. I (Appendix 3). This interim report contains the analysis of a set of important items such as *Uḍaiyāṇ*, *Mūvēnda Vēḷāṇ*, *Brahmarāyaṇ*, *Nakkaṇ*, *Madhyastha*, *Nāḍāḷvāṇ* and a group of titles on the basis of information collected and arranged on the hole-sort cards. The findings of the analysis are qualified as "only preliminary to the analysis to be made in more detail using the computer" (Vol. I, p. xiv). Yet, the authors findings are quite instructive.

The analysis, for instance, of the titles viz., *MūvēndaVēḷāṇ* and *Brahmarāyaṇ* indicates a strong connection between these titles and the titles or names of the Chōla kings suggesting thereby a close relationship between the king and the holders of this title. But more significant is the fact that almost one third of the *MūvēndaVēḷāṇ* title holders also hold the title *Uḍaiyāṇ* and are also often found associated with particular locality (*nāḍu*) as well as with the revenue collection (*Puravuvāri*). In contrast, the connection between the title *Brahmarāyaṇ* and *Uḍaiyāṇ* is negligible, though the association of *Brahmarāyaṇ* with the title *Senāpati* is noticeable.



It is generally accepted by scholars that the *Mūvēnda-Vēlāṇ* title holders were persons of the Vellāla caste, and *Brahmarāyaṇs* were Brāhmans. If that be so then the findings of the above analysis would effectively challenge the hypothesis that finds favour among a section of historians, that the Brāhmans were the most powerful landed intermediaries in the class-composition during the Chōla rule in South India.

Historical conclusions are not always simple statistical deductions. If applied less circumspectly, the statistical methods are likely to produce results which may be illusory or even absurd. The analysis of the name (or title?) *Nakkaṇ* is perhaps a case in point. The chronological and topographical distribution of *Nakkaṇ* title particularly in Chōla-maṇḍalam, shows a clear decreasing tendency during A. D. 859-1250. Pointing out that the name *Nakkaṇ* is the Tamilized form of *Nagna* (skt.) which is one name of Śiva, the authors then pose a question: "Can we argue . . . that the popularity of the name in Chola-maṇḍalam in the early Chola period and its unpopularity in the same area in the later period would show the vicissitudes of Śaivism in Chola-maṇḍalam?" (Vol. I, p. ii). One cannot argue that way, because the argument not only ignores the pattern of distribution of other names or titles of Śiva such as *Kāṭaṇ* Śaṅkaran, *Kūṭṭaṇ*, *Ammāi-appaṇ*, *Kaṇṭaṇ* etc., in Chōla-maṇḍalam during the same span of time, but also seeks to establish an unacceptable proposition that there was a steep decline of Śaivism in Chōla-maṇḍalam with the accession of Rājaraṇja I in A.D. 985. In this connection, it is noteworthy that the authors have excluded from the analysis the Tanjavur temple inscription which gives as many as 400 *Nakkaṇs* 'as being exceptional', the rationale of which is not easily understood by the reviewer.

One, however, need not dwell at length on these 'preliminary' findings, but can wait till the more detailed analyses are done using the computer. Suffice it to say that the preliminary report amply illustrates the immense scope and possibilities provided by *The Concordance* for further study of the Chōla period on the basis of the wealth of information accompanying each entry in coded form. The researchers on South Indian history in general and the Chōla history in particular, therefore, owe a debt of gratitude to the authors not only for publishing *The Concordance* but also for adding a new dimension to the methodology of historical research in South India.

G. SUBBIAH



HINDUSTHAN GADAR PARTY, Vols. I and II; TRAGEDY OF KOMAGATAMARU; THE GREAT ATTACK—by Sohan Singh Josh. Published by Peoples Publishing House, New Delhi.

All the above-stated four are very interesting works of history written from inside with a perceptible sense of involvement by one who had been directly or otherwise associated with much of what he has written on or with many who actively participated in these. It speaks highly of the author's strange vigour and versatility that having spent over fifty years in the active and often violent politics, he could at this ripe old age undertake arduous foreign tours and write books that constitute a definite contribution to easily available knowledge.

The first two volumes, as the name suggests, deal with the rise and role of the Gadar revolutionaries of North America against a very wide backdrop of the activities of their comrades elsewhere and the growing movement of anti-imperialism all over the world till virtually the beginning of the Second World War. He, in a way, traces the roots of the Gadar movement to the first so-called Gadar of 1857-58 and the Kuka movement among the Sikhs and proceeds to explain how the human material for the Gadar movement in North America was created by the large scale immigration of Punjabee, mostly Sikh, farmers and workers into its Pacific coast in the early years of this century. He feelingly refers to their aspirations, struggles and achievements as well as the racial animosity and legal obstacles they later faced, which soon converted a band of courageous self-seeking uneducated workers into determined self-sacrificing patriots. The first volume brings the story down to the Komagatamaru episode which was both bloody and bitter and was brought to a close a couple of months after the First World War had broken out in Europe.

The second volume narrates the experiences and evolutions the Gadar movement underwent during and after the First World War, their



efforts to liberate their motherland from alien rule with German help during the war and later to free their countrymen from all forms of exploitation with the help of Marxism and Communist International as well as the tensions and rivalries from which the movement suffered during its long and chequered life of over thirty years. He has given interesting vignettes of certain revolutionaries and their close foreign associates, like Prem Singh Gill, Teja Singh Swatantra and Miss Agnes Smedley, and have written about little-known organisations, like International Union of the Oppressed Peoples of the East which first met at Hankow in 1925. He reveals how most Gadarites after World War I took to Marxism as their new creed and remained active in their new cause till the curtain is rung down on his story with the outbreak of the Second World War.

In writing both these volumes the author has ignored many well-known sources but has made use of many others so far unheard of and untapped. As an insider with considerable drive he secured access to dozens of published as well as unpublished memoirs, reports and statements — in English, Hindi, Urdu and Punjabee — of those who were closely involved in or were eye witnesses of the events narrated. By thus allowing the actors to speak for themselves or through their close friends the author adds a new dimension and interesting element to the story which few detached researchers can ever impart. And he has made use of such material lying neglected in remote corners of India, Canada and the U.S.A.

At the same time, he has largely ignored the material available to any scholar in the National Archives of India or the India Office Library, London. The former now contains the microfilms of the Immigrations Deptts. of Canada and of the U.S. as well as of the Hindu Conspiracy Case and the relevant documents of the Foreign Office of Imperial Germany. However, it has to be borne in mind that the author has much longer interest and experience in the making of history than in its writing and therefore the rigorous demands of a research work should not be made on his writings. He draws almost indiscriminately upon primary as well as tertiary sources and cares little for checking the authenticity of the information supplied. Often for pages he would state new facts and views without mentioning their source anywhere, while his method as narration is that of a story-teller and is full of digressions, repetitions and interesting but trivial anecdotes.



He has not actually tried to explain the assumptions of the Gadarites who sailed for India, their weaknesses, and the underlying causes of their internal dissensions among the students and the farmers, the orthodox Sikhs and the liberal ones, and the Berlin-based revolutionaries and those of the Pacific coast.

In terms of time *The Tragedy of Komagatamaru*, published in 1975, is the first of these four works under review and, within its short compass and perhaps because of it, certainly is the best among them. Of course, so much has been already written in India and abroad on this incident, in so many Indian languages and in English, that there is hardly any scope for making any meaningful addition to the already existing corpus of knowledge on this subject. However through pain-staking work in Canada itself the author has secured access to reports, like that of H.H. Stevens and of many others, Indians and Canadians, on both the sides of the barricade. As a result his account contains the details as well as the elements of a real drama not available till its publication. Of course, later Johnston's work on the same subject has shed further new light on it, but the latter's approach and emphasis are different. As a pure narrative of events, from the compulsions that called for the chartering of the ship to the Budge Budge killing and their aftermath it is a matchless work in detail in every sense. However, one desires that, whatever be the event's ultimate political fall out, the passengers who were essentially poachers without any legal or moral right to enter Canada should not have been painted as patriotic heroes — brave desperadoes although they were. Resistance they put up at Vancouver and Budge Budge has been ably narrated and deserves our praise.

The last of the four is *The Great Attack* published in 1979 to mark the golden Jubilee of the Meerut Conspiracy Case in which the author himself was one of the accused. It is a brief but coherent account of organised labour agitation in India for a dozen years following the First World War and of the wrath they had to bear of their own exploiting countrymen and of their alien masters. It speaks of the impact of the Bolshevik Revolution, efforts by M. N. Roy to establish an organised communist group in India with regular links with Communist International, the little-known strikes at Lillooah, Bowria Jute Mills and South Indian Railway, and the much-publicised conspiracy cases of Peshawar, Kanpur and Meerut. However, the book has been written more in the form of a memoir without any effort to prove the authenticity of the information put forward with reference to their sources. So, depending on the reader's trust in the author's memory and detachment, it can be taken as a useful account of communist-sponsored



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labour trouble in India in one of her most critical decades and of the reactions of our imperialist rulers.

While all these four books are readable and informative serious students of history will always find in them one glaring flaw. As admitted by the author in the preface to his works he has written these — as he believes all historians should — with a definite purpose, to expose the hypocritical and exploitive nature of British rule, the compromising and ultimately treacherous role of the Indian bourgeoisie, and the pure and militant, though often weak and unorganised, class struggle carried out by the few politically conscious members of the Indian proletariat and peasantry. So cold and detached analysis of motives, events and results is not to be expected in his writings. The works are full of venom for the so-called imperialists and of unrestrained adulation for the struggling and suffering Indians which often ignore the solid arguments of the former and the obvious short-comings of the latter. For him the maxim is “those who are not with us are against us” and that is why he makes uncalled for disparaging remarks about M. N. Roy and Mahendra Pratap. In fact most Germans and Americans who had met M.N. Roy (then Narendra Bhattacharya) during World War I are full of praise for his manifold qualities of head and heart. Even his old Indian associates and later critics have all praise for young Narendra.

There are a few factual mistakes, apart from those whose veracity cannot be ascertained. Sukumar Chatterjee and his friends never came to India and were arrested in Thailand on their way. The secret codes used by the Germans and the Indians fell into the hands of the French, in August 1915, through Czech spies operating in the U.S. on behalf of the Allies. However, such mistakes are few and can be detected almost in every work. What is important is the amount of information the aged revolutionary writer has collected from different sources spread over different continents. If these are good history not so well-written—as I believe — then it is for any trained historian to make proper use of the material now made so easily available to him through the medium of English. For this alone the author deserves the gratefulness of all students of history.

A. C. BOSE







## PART II







## Radhagovinda Basak (1885–1982)

BY

KALYAN KUMAR DASGUPTA

### I

Radhagovinda Basak, the seniormost epigraphist-historian in India, passed away on the 10 December, 1982, at the age of 92. In his death the world of indology has lost one of the greatest scholars of the century.

Radhagovinda Basak was born in the town of Dhākā (anglicised Dacca) the capital of Bangladesh, on January 8, 1885. He passed the entrance examination from the local Kishor Lal Jubilee School in 1901 in First Division and secured a scholarship. Thereafter he took admission in the Dhākā College from where he appeared at the M. A. examination in Sanskrit of the Calcutta University in 1907 and stood second class first and obtained a prize. He joined the Bengal Provincial Educational service in the following year and served as Head Pandit for three months in the Dhākā Collegiate School. Then he obtained the prestigious East Bengal and Assam Government Research Scholarship and carried on researches in Indian epigraphy and palaeography under the supervision of the great linguist Harinath De in the Imperial (now National) Library for about a couple of years (1908–10). In 1910 he officiated as Lecturer in Sanskrit in the Dhākā College and a year later was appointed Lecturer in Sanskrit in the Rajshahi College where he worked for eight years.

The Rajshahi phase of Basak's life was fruitful in ways more than one. His close association with the Varendra Research Society and its founder-member and guiding spirit, Akshyay Kumar Maitreya, enabled him to utilise his knowledge of Sanskrit, epigraphy and palaeography in deciphering and editing inscriptions which the Society along other antiquities had then been collecting. Indeed it was at Rajshahi that



Dr. Basak made his debut as an epigraphist by editing for the *Epigraphia Indica* for the first time the Belava Copper-plate of the East Bengal king Bhojavarman (*infra*). Most of the land-sale documents of the Gupta period, including the well-known ones found at Damodarpur, which were recovered from oblivion by the society were edited by Basak during these years. Secondly, here he came in contact with Sir Asutosh Mookerjee while the latter visited the Rajshahi College as a member of the Royal Sadler Commission in December, 1917. We are told that his paper on two land-sale copper-plate inscriptions of the time of Budhagupta (two of the five Damodarpur Copper-plates of the Gupta period), which he presented at the meeting held in the Rajshahi College and presided over by Sir Asutosh, elicited admiration of the latter. To quote Basak:<sup>1</sup> 'As a sort of reward for my decipherment of the ancient records, Sir Asutosh appointed me to a Lectureship in the then newly started Indian Epigraphy'. His association with the Calcutta University and later with the Dhākā University substantially helped him to prosecute his researches with greater intensity in epigraphy and palaeography, in addition to in Sanskrit languages and literatures.

After serving more than a year in the Calcutta University Basak went back to Rajshahi College on obtaining the Senior Professorship in Sanskrit in the then Bengal Provincial Educational Service and worked there till 1921. In the same year he joined the newly founded Dhākā University (on deputation) and served from July 1921 to July 1933 as Lecturer in the Department of Sanskrit and Bengali and also additionally as Lecturer in Epigraphy in the department of History. Before his reversion to the government service in July 1933 he was admitted to the Ph.D. degree of the Dhākā University for his dissertation *History of North Eastern India*. However, he left Dhākā in the same month and joined the Presidency College as Professor of Sanskrit in the Senior Educational Service. Shortly he became the head of the Department of Sanskrit and Sanskrit Languages as well and retired from the Presidency College in December 1940. During the period (until 1941) he was an Honorary Lecturer in the departments of Sanskrit, Pāli and Ancient Indian History and Culture of the Calcutta University.

After his retirement from government service Dr. Basak seemingly got more time to engage himself in study and research, and till 1970, when he was 85, used to write in his own hand. The author of

<sup>1</sup> D.C. Sircar (ed.), *Prācyāvidyā-Taraṅgiṇī*, Calcutta, 1969, p. 268.



this note admirably recalls how in 1966 he took the trouble of reading the date of an inscription and expressed his disagreement with D. C. Sircar with regard to this date. I had the good fortune to assist him to prepare the second edition of his well-known work, *History of North-Eastern India*, but most of the revisions were done by himself in the light of the materials which I had collected and given to him.

The Sanskrit College of Calcutta was wise enough to requisition the services of Radhagovinda Basak by inviting him to act as a member of the Committee for Post-Graduate Training and Research and also as Chairman of the Board of Editors for Research Publications. It honoured him by conferring the title of *Vidyāvāchaspati* in 1963. Dr. Basak presided over Section I (Ancient India) of the Indian History Congress at Gwalior in 1952 and delivered a course of three lectures on 'Indian Life as depicted in the Buddhist Sanskrit work, *Mahāvastu Avadāna*' at the Calcutta University in 1958. The President of India gave him the 'Certificate of honour in Sanskrit' on August 15, 1965, while the Asiatic Society elected him its Honorary Fellow in 1967 and awarded him the Tagore Plaque in 1980.

## II

Though Basak has modestly called himself a Sanskritist and an epigraphist,<sup>2</sup> he is by any measure a front-rank historian. And this is amply borne out by his *History of North-Eastern India*, which is marked by thoroughness, critical spirit and ability to synthesize fact into a cogent narrative. This work originally a doctoral dissertation was published in 1934 and proved to be the first in-depth study of the north-eastern sector of India in ancient times. To be precise, this is the first work which aims at working a connected history of the region comprising the States now known as Bihar, Bengal, Assam and Orissa during the period extending approximately from A. D. 320 to A. D. 760. A revised and enlarged edition of the book came out in 1967.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Presidential Address, Section I, XVth Session, Indian History Congress, Gwalior, 1952, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> I recall with pleasure of the days when I had been helping him in preparing this edition.



Of the twelve chapters (the second edition contains two appendices on the problems of Kācha and Rāmagupta regarding their connections with the Imperial Gupta dynasty) of the *History of North-Eastern India* (henceforth occasionally referred to as *History*) as many as three dwell on the history of the Imperial Guptas, from the beginning to the end. The annals of the dynasties and kingdoms like the Maukharis, the Later Guptas, Śasāṅka and his kingdom, the kingdom of Orissa (Uḍra Koṇ-Koṇgada-Kaliṅga) the kingdom of Vaṅga-Samataṭa, the kingdom of Kāmarūpa and the kingdom of Nepal have been recounted in seven chapters. The first and last chapters contain 'introductory' and 'concluding' remarks. A synchornistic table showing the duration of these kingdoms and dynasties has added to the usefulness of the book.

The approach to the history of the area and the period in question is chiefly epigraphical, and it is in this respect that the book differs from the similar ones in character. In other words, the accent in this work is on the relevant epigraphical records. Yet the author has not confined himself to such documents and has utilised the data gathered from other sources, such as the numismatic and literary, to make his story complete. When this book first appeared in 1934, it was welcomed by the academic world as a major publication in the field on account of the wealth of the fresh data collected from the epigraphical records hailing from different parts of North Bengal, such as Damodarpur, Dhanaidaha and Beigram. Most of them are land-grants of the period of imperial Guptas, and notably, most of them were edited by Basak himself in the pages of the *Epigraphia Indica*. Indeed, one of the distinctive traits of the book lies in the hitherto unknown facts which these epigraphical documents have furnished: (i) the entire province of Puṇḍravardhana (roughly the Rajshahi division of the pre-partition days) was included in the Gupta empire; (ii) Budhagupta ruled for a long period and he held the sway not only over the western portion of India, but also over a large part of North-Eastern India, (iii) the imperial Gupta dynasty continued to rule in full glory at least upto the first quarter of the sixth century, through a succession of three or four more monarchs after Skandagupta; and (iv) the district officers (*Viśhayapati*) under the provincial governors, themselves appointed by the Gupta monarches, were assisted in the administration of the *Viśhayādhikaraṇa* by an Advisory Board consisting of four members, representing various interest-groups of the days, namely, the *nagarasres-thin* (the President of the town-guild of bankers), the *paramasārthavāha* (the representative of the merchant class), the *pratamakulika* (the representative of the artisan class) and the *prathamakāyastha* (probably, the



chief scribe, the head of government officials).<sup>4</sup> Other notable features of the work may be found in the treatment of the history of the Śailodbhava kings of Orissa<sup>5</sup> and that of the early Lichchhavi rulers of Nepal.<sup>6</sup> Theories seeking to identify the king Susthitavarman mentioned in the Apsad inscription of the Later Gupta dynasty with his namesake of Kāmarūpa<sup>7</sup> and the King Devavarman of Vaṅga-Samataṭa<sup>8</sup> (East Bengal, now largely a part of Bangladesh) with Devagupta of the Later Gupta dynasty may also be mentioned in this context. Again, Radhagovinda is the first scholar to write a connected history of Vaṅga-Samataṭa from the earliest times to about the middle of the eighth century. He has also tried to make a dispassionate assessment of the career of the Bengal king, Śaśāṅka, and has thrown new light on it by the facts gathered from the *Ārya-Maṇjuśrīmūla-Kalpa*, a Buddhist treatise written some-time in the Gupta period.

As said above, the approach to the *History of North-Eastern India* is chiefly epigraphical. Even at the risk of jarring upon the readability of his book Radhagovinda has not hesitated to give the contents of the relevant epigraphical records in a nutshell. As a result the general readers of his History, particularly who are not conversant with Sanskrit, can avoid the trouble of consulting the original records or the editions and translations thereof published in *Epigraphia Indica* and similar research journals, which are now not easily available. For instance, the five copper-plates from Damodarpur, forming one of the most important discoveries in Eastern Indian epigraphy, were edited by Basak himself in the XVth volume of the *Epigraphia Indica* (119-20), which is now almost inaccessible, but the reader of his book may feel largely satisfied by the contents of these plates which he has incorporated in it. The remark applies to the other inscriptional documents like the copper-plates from Baigram, Dhanidaha and Paharpur in North Bengal and the Puri plates of the Sailodbhava king Mādhavarman (Sainyabhita). With regard to the history of Nepal, Dr. Basak did not spare any pain to make thorough revision of the relevant chapter of the first edition of his work in the light of new materials as embodied in the *Nepalese Inscriptions in Gupta Characters* (1956) by Raniero Gnoli. And incidentally, he did it at 80 when he was preparing the

4 *History of North-Eastern India* (henceforth *HNI*), 2nd edn, p. 69.

5 *Ibid.*, pp. 205-20.

6 *Ibid.*, pp. 277-300.

7 *Ibid.*, pp. 147.

8 *Ibid.*, pp. 154.



second edition of his work. As in other chapters, so in the chapter on Nepal he has given the contents of the relevant inscriptions and his treatment of these records is comparatively detailed.

Though Radhagovinda's fame as a historian rests largely on his *History of North-Eastern India*, his uninterrupted services to Clio are borne out by a number of research papers lying scattered in various journals and periodicals. Some of these research papers contain original materials, as provided, for instance, by the Rampal<sup>9</sup> and the Madanpur<sup>10</sup> Copper-plates of Śrichandra, an illustrious member of the Chandra dynasty of East Bengal of the tenth century, the Belava Copper-plate<sup>11</sup> of Bhojavarman, another East Bengal king of the twelfth century and the Silimpur stone inscription of the time of Jayapāladeva Kāmarūpa (probably the unknown allied king who conquered for the Pala king Ramapala). The Rampal Copper-plate, along with others discovered subsequently, disclose the existence of a family of kings with 'Chandra' name ending who ruled between c. A.D. 825 and A.D. 1035: and in particular this record offers us a glimpse of the emergence of the rise of this royal dynasty of East Bengal, which held sway over Chandradvīpa and Harikela, comprising approximately the whole of East Bengal and the coastal areas of Southern Bengal. It also tells us that Suvarṇachandra, the second member of the family, embraced Buddhism, perhaps suggesting that until his time the family followed Brahmanical religion. Similarly, the Belava Copper-plate of Bhojavarman, the first and the only complete record of the Varman dynasty to be brought to light, has disclosed the existence of another line of kings in East Bengal, who succeeded the aforesaid Chandra kings. Indeed, this copper-plate is the chief source of information of this royal dynasty. The Silimpur inscription, alluding to a settlement of the Brāhmaṇas in a village in Varendra (Rājshāhi division), has thrown some interesting light on the contemporary social history.<sup>12</sup> All these inscriptions have been proved to be substantially valuable as sources of history of the early medieval Bengal and some of them were published by Radhagovind Basak well-nigh sixtysix years ago, when the study of the history of ancient Bengal was at its infancy.

9 *Epigraphia Indica*, XII.

10 *Ibid.*, XXVIII.

11 *Ibid.*, XII.

12 *Ibid.*, XIII.



*The History of North-Eastern India*, as the author himself admits, is neither solely a political history, nor a cultural one, but to some extent a blending of both.<sup>13</sup> The feeling of inability to make his book comprehensive by including in it full-length discussions on the non-political aspects of the people of North-Eastern India perhaps later prompted him to write on the social, economic, religious and cultural conditions of ancient India in general and Bengal in particular. And for this he delved deep in ancient literature, for he rightly believed that ample historical materials lying embedded in ancient texts, could be used for the reconstruction of the history of ancient India.<sup>14</sup> Thus long after the publication of *History* came in succession a series of old texts, edited and or translated (in Bengali as well as in English) by him: *Kauṭīliya Arthaśāstra* (in 1950-51 with only Bengali rendering, and in 1964 with the original text as well), Sandhyākarnandin's *Rāmacharitha* (1953 with a Bengali rendering together with the original text; prior to it he collaborated with R.C. Majumdar and Pandit Nanigopal Banerjee in publishing its critical edition along with the original text and its English translation in 1939), Hala's *Gāthāsattasāi* (1956 with the original and the Bengali rendering thereof, and in 1971 with the original and the English translation as well as a long introduction comprising historical and cultural gleanings), Pravarasena's *Rāvaṇavaha* or *Setubandha* (1959)<sup>15</sup> and the *Mahāvastu Avadāna*.<sup>16</sup> His last work in the area of textual scholarship is the reincarnation of Haraprasad Sastri's edition of the *Rāmacharita* (1910); it was published by the Asiatic Society in 1972, which had also published Sastri's edition. Basak's editions of all these old texts, enriched by perceptive and informative 'Introductions', have facilitated the task of collecting historical and cultural materials from them and have set the model for subsequent editors of ancient texts. They also bear the evidence of his literary sensibility. For instance,

13 *HNI*, preface to the 1st edn., reprinted in the 2nd., p. xii.

14 Presidential Address (fn.1), p. 6. Basak's interest in ancient texts and manuscripts goes back to 1921 when he purchased a seventeenth century Bengali manuscript of the *Rāvaṇavaha*, later edited by him in the Sanskrit College Research Series, Calcutta.

15 Basak spent many a year of hard labour on this fifth-century Prakrit epic. In 1930 he read a paper on its commentary, *Setutattvachandrikā*, his own discovery, at the fifth Orient Conference at Lahore. Later it was published in the *Proceedings and Transactions* (pp. 656-65) of the said Conference.

16 It is a Buddhist Sanskrit text of the early centuries of the Christian era. Its language is not pure Sanskrit and is often termed the 'Gāthā' dialect. According to Basak, it was a conventional one and was created by the Buddhists of Northern India which could be easily understood by the general run of its readers and listeners.



he has discovered in the *Rāvaṇavaha* the stamp of the talent of 'a poet of highest order' and 'a master of the Prakrit language' (Intro., p. xx), and compared the eleventh canto of the work (in his words 'unique') with the pathos of Rati in Kālidasa's *Kumārasambhavam*. Further the author of *The History of North-Eastern India* has studied these old texts with the mind and eye of a historian and made good use of the data collected therefrom in his historical writings. His alertness and critical faculty have enabled him to locate comparable materials lying in them and thus he has rightly observed that many a political maxim and doctrine of the *Mahāvastu* are but reflections of the political views of Kauṭilya. He has also adduced many parallel words and passages from the *Mahāvastu* in elucidation of pertinent words and passages occurring in the inscriptions of Aśoka, dealt with by him in his compendious *Asokan Inscriptions* (1959). Expectedly at the same time his knowledge of, and taste in, literature has enabled him to look at the epigraphical records from a literary point of view. He is one of the few Indian scholars to study these old inscriptions not as mere culture-fossils, but as live records of the past, yielding occasionally 'fine samples of literary art' with a significant bearing on the history of Indian literature.<sup>17</sup>

### III

The rare combination of an excellent Sanskritist and a sound epigraphist in Radhagovinda Basak have endowed his *oeuvre* a commendable perfection. His editions of the inscriptions like those discovered at Damodarpur, Baigram, Rampal and Belava, published well-nigh sixty or seventy years ago, are still the most dependable. Subsequent emendations or modifications of words and passages contained in these records are marginal and the explanations of certain words and translations of some passages suggested by later writers are by and large a matter of interpretation or opinion. For instance, on the basis of the Damodarpur Copper-plates Basak holds that in the Gupta period whole village or individual cultivator was the real owner of land.<sup>18</sup> U. N.

<sup>17</sup> See his article 'Literary Value of Ancient Indian Inscriptions', *Cultural Heritage of India*, R. K. Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta, 1978.

<sup>18</sup> *Asutosh Mookherjee Silver Jubilee Commemoration Volume* (henceforth *AMSJC.V.*) III, pp.485-91.



Ghoshal<sup>19</sup> challenged this view, but could not meet the argument of Basak regarding the transaction of the sale of land with the consent or approval of the peoples' representatives, and at one stage he waveringly remarked that these peoples' representatives were more likely minor officials. R. C. Majumdar<sup>20</sup> also admitted that 'perhaps in more primitive times the villagers, either individually or through their assemblies, possessed specific rights over the lands within the jurisdiction of the village, thus supporting Basak's main contention that the Damodar-pur grants 'belong to a period when the Crown began to be recognised as absolute owner of all lands' in place of 'the people' who were the original proprietors. Similarly, while Basak interpreted the word *kuṭumbin*<sup>21</sup> (occurring in these grants) as 'householders,' Ghoshal<sup>22</sup> took it to mean 'heads of households'. Instances can be multiplied to show that differences of opinion between Basak and his critics on this word or that passage mentioned in the records edited by him are of peripheral nature, without affecting the infrastructure of the theory.

Radhagovinda's long experience as a teacher of Sanskrit and Sanskritic languages combined with his prolonged study of epigraphical and literary documents has made not only his research publications of incalculable value, but also the books which he has written for the advanced students of ancient Indian history and culture and the educated readers in general. His Bengali renderings of Kauṭīliya's *Arthaśāstra*, *Gāthāsattasāi* (Sanskrit *Gāthāsaptasatī*) and the *Rāmacharita* are cases in point. So also are his original works like *Prāchīna Rājyaśāsanapaddhati* (1955) and *Lectures on Buddha and Buddhism* (1961). Behind the publication of his Asokan Inscriptions lay his earnest desire to 'create and urge for an intensive study of these very ancient records of India by graduate and post-graduate students of different Universities in India and abroad'. And indeed this compendious edition of Asokan inscriptions containing all their versions with their Sanskrit-English translations as well as some anglo-Sanskrit notes on important words is the standard and the most useful in the field. Moreover, for generating interest in our heritage among the educated Bengalees he wrote several articles in Bengali on various topics, such as inscriptions, polity, society

19 *Contributions to the History of the Hindu Revenue System*, Calcutta, 1929, pp. 206-7.

20 *History of Bengal*, I, Dacca University, 1943, p. 271.

21 *AMSJCV*, II, pp. 491-92.

22 *Op.cit.*, p. 200, fn. 2.



and religion in the well-known Bengali journals of bygone days like *Sāhitya Bhāratavarsha* and *Pravāsi*. And for English-knowing readers he contributed to the journals like *Indo-Asian Culture* and *Bulletin of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture*.

All what has been said above will reveal that Basak has written practically on every aspect of ancient Indian history and culture. Apart from the *History of North-Eastern India*, which is chiefly a work on political history, he has written on administration (his contribution to the *History of Bengal*, edited by R. C. Majumdar, Dacca University, 1943) socio-economic conditions ('Indian Society as pictured in the *Mṛcchhakaṭika*', *Indian Historical Quarterly*, 1929), the introduction to his Bengali and English versions of the *Gāthāsattasāi*, ancient Indian polity and ethics (Arthaśāstras and Nītiśāstras in *The Cultural Heritage of India*, II, Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture) literary history ('The Literary Value of Ancient Indian Inscriptions' *Cultural Heritage of India*, V, 1978). 'A Lecture on the Origin of Sanskrit Drama', *Dacca Review*, 1913) and Ancient Indian Religion and Philosophy (*Buddha and Buddhism: The Hindu Conception of the Natural World*; Chapter III of the *Religion of the Hindus*, New York, 1953). An anthology of all such papers, arranged subject-wise would enable his readers to make an appreciative estimate of his contributions to the reconstruction of our twilight past.

#### IV

Radhagovinda Basak is an open-minded scholar. He does not advance his hypotheses dogmatically and has no theoretical axe to grind. To him accuracy of historical facts is more important than any extra-historical consideration. He stressed the need of guarding 'against making overvaluation or undervaluation of sources of historical materials and also against forming dogmatic decisions or conclusions based on insufficient and weak testimonies'. In these respects Radhagovinda Basak belongs to the School of Rajendralal Mitra and R. G. Bhandarkar who gave precedence to historical truth to everything else and strove to ascertain this truth by proceeding on such principles as are followed by a judge. This mental attitude may account for his theory regarding the assassination of Rājyavardhana in the camp of the Bengal king Śaśaṅka. After thoroughly investigating the question of this Śaśaṅka-Rājyavardhana episode he concludes: 'All sources clearly supply clear evidence that



Rājyavardhana was treacherously assassinated by Śaśāṅka. We must not have the predilection to exculpate Śaśāṅka from any misdeed perpetrated by him as an ambitious monarch and boost him up to full and undue eminence' (Does not this pronouncement sound like the verdict of a strict and dispassionate judge trying a murder case?). On one or two occasions he appears to be somewhat dogmatic: he fondly clung to his old view that Chandra of the Meharauli pillar inscription should be identified with Chandragupta I. But such a thing is perhaps pardonable, since a historian is after all a human being and history is but the story of this human being.

Though Basak belongs to the so-called old school of historians he has evinced his modern outlook in underlining the necessity of studying the history of the neighbouring countries. In one instance he has set an example; he is one of the few Indian scholars who has studied the history of Nepal in depth, and spared no pains to update the chapter on the history of ancient Nepal in the second edition of his *History* in the light of new materials. His interest in the history of Nepal stemmed from his conviction that a fuller understanding of ancient Indian history and culture is possible only in the context of the history and culture of a neighbouring region like Nepal which was an integral part of India in ancient times.

## V

Radhagovinda Basak belongs to a generation which is fast disappearing. His works represent the sunset glow of the historical scholarship which was inaugurated in the last century by Western Indologists and sustained by their Indian compatriots. His love for his mother tongue is exemplary and his extensive *oeuvre* in Bengali seems to mark the climax of a tradition flourishing since the time of Haraprasad Sastri and Akshyay Kumar Maitryea, when history was in happy rapport with literature. With him perhaps ends an era of historical scholarship based on sound knowledge of source-languages and textual restoration. Radhagovinda Basak will perhaps be looked on as a colossal wonder of historical and Sanskrit scholarship in the days to come when historians with the knowledge of Sanskrit will have to be imported for the study of ancient Indian history and culture.







## The Life and Works of Kalinkinkar Datta (1905–1982)

BY

J. C. JHA

Kalinkinkar Datta, who died on 24 March 1982, was born on 5 May 1905 in a lower middle class Bengali Kayastha family at Jhikarhaty in the Pakur sub-division of the Santal Parganas district (now a division) of South Bihar. His father, Sadananda, a saintly<sup>1</sup> headmaster who served two high schools, and his mother, Sarojini, were his main source of inspiration for serious studies and honest dealings. Like any immigrant Bengali family in Bihar, the Dattas preferred English Education to the traditional one.

After passing the matriculation examination of the Patna University in 1921 Datta studied at the K. N. College, Berhampur where he made his mark at a debator and the secretary of the college union.<sup>2</sup> He also impressed his teachers as a disciplined, sincere and co-operative student.<sup>3</sup> He stood second in the first class in the B. A. (History Honours) examination and then studied in the post-graduate department of History of the Calcutta University under eminent teachers like Tripurari Chakravarty, K. Zacharias, H. C. Raichaudhuri, Kalidas Nag, I. B. Banerjee, Sushobhan Sarkar and others. Outside the campus he was influenced by R. C. Majumdar whom he respected as one of his teachers. Throughout his life Datta continued to respect his teachers and they, in their turn, loved him.<sup>4</sup>

1 J. N. Sarkar, "Kali Babu as I have Known him", *Journal of the Bihar Research Society* (henceforth JBRS), Vol. LIX, parts I-IV, 1973, p. xxxiv. From his father Datta inherited "a strong moral sense and integrity" and in deference to his wishes, gave up chewing betel.

2 *Vide* Datta's Autobiography (mss.).

3 *Ibid.*

4 Sarkar, *op.cit.*



After standing second in the first class in the M. A. (History) examination,<sup>5</sup> Datta joined in July 1928 as the first Bihar and Orissa Government research scholar in History in the Patna College,<sup>6</sup> the premier college of Bihar. In July 1930 he became a lecturer, but continued his research work with all sincerity. He was fortunate indeed to join the department the spadework for whose greatness in the field of research had been done by Jadunath Sarkar. Now Dr. Subimal Chandra Sarkar was sowing the seeds for the consolidation of the work begun by Jadunath. With his talent and hard work Datta "not only reaped the harvest but also reclaimed new lands" and the state of Bihar could enjoy "that rich and plentiful harvest."<sup>7</sup>

Datta was also fortunate in having sincere colleagues like Syed Hasan Askari who helped him a good deal in translating the Persian manuscripts useful for his research work.<sup>8</sup> So far as the research methodology was concerned, S. C. Sarkar, with his research training in Oxford, taught Datta the "up-to-date methods of research — taking notes on cards and not slips, giving cross references, indexing them and how to comment and note down all fresh ideas. . ."<sup>9</sup>

No wonder Datta got the Premchand Roychand scholarship and the Griffith prize of the Calcutta University in the very early stage of his teaching career. From the very beginning he was not only a good researcher but also a successful teacher on the strength of his hard work and an extraordinary memory. He also associated actively with the activities of the students' organisations like the Archaeological and Historical Society.<sup>10</sup>

In 1937 Datta was awarded the Ph.D. degree of the Calcutta

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xix. He secured cent per cent marks in the International Law paper.

<sup>6</sup> S. H. Askari, "Kali Babu, my friend — reminiscences", *JBRs*, 1973, p. xxvii.

<sup>7</sup> Sarkar, *op.cit.*, p. xx.

<sup>8</sup> According to Professor Askari, who was interviewed by the author of this paper, Dr. S. C. Sarkar asked him to help this young researcher and the two scholars used to sit religiously in the Khudabux Oriental Library of Patna almost everyday. Also see the preface to K. K. Datta, *Alivardi and His Times*, Calcutta, 1939. Also see Askari, *op.cit.*

<sup>9</sup> Sarkar, *op. cit.*, p. xix.

<sup>10</sup> *Patna College Magazine*, Vol. xxxvi, Sept. 1946, no. 1, p. vi and Oct. 1941 (Vol. xxii, no. 1), p. viii.



University<sup>11</sup> and was promoted to the Assistant Professor's post. Seven years later he became a Professor in the Class I of the Bihar Education Service<sup>12</sup> and next year when Dr. Sarkar retired, he became the Head of the P. G. History Department of a University which had under its jurisdiction the whole of Bihar as well as Nepal.

Dr. Datta was so popular among his students and colleagues<sup>13</sup> that he was felicitated by them whenever he got a prize or a scholarship.<sup>14</sup> As the warden of the hostels of the Patna College in the late 1940s and early 1950s he would visit the hostel rooms every day, enquiring about the welfare of the boarders. Since he walked a few miles every evening and was usually accompanied by a few junior teachers and students, he would lend them books, correct their answers and try to solve their problems. Indeed, he was a source of inspiration to them.

From the very early stage of his teaching career Dr. Datta got associated with the All-India academic bodies like the Indian History Congress, the Indian Historical Records Commission, the All-India Oriental Conference, contributing papers and taking a leading part in the discussions. As early as 1930 he and Professor Askari were entrusted with the task of organising an exhibition of manuscripts on the occasion of the sessions of the All-India Oriental Conference and the Indian Historical Records Commission at Patna.<sup>15</sup> Later, he presided over the Modern India section of the Indian History Congress and in 1958 became its General President at Trivandrum.

Datta was a very good speaker with a rich voice. In 1949 he delivered a series of lectures at the Nagpur University. In the 1960s he

11 *Studies in the History of the Bengal Subah, 1740-70* which had earned him the P.R.S. had already been published and his Ph.D. thesis was on the theme of Alivardi and his times.

12 B.K. Sinha, "Dr. K.K. Datta and his Writings", *JBRs*, 1973, p. ii.

13 His colleagues, Professors Askari and J. N. Sarkar speak very highly of him and the writer of this paper had the opportunity of being his student and later a junior colleague.

14 B. P. Sinha, 'My Reminiscences of the Patna University', *Patna University Golden Jubilee Souvenir*, Patna, 1970, p. 112.

15 Askari, *op.cit.*, p. xxviii. In the 9th Session of the Indian History Congress held at Patna in December 1946 Dr. Datta as the local secretary arranged an exhibition of documents, paintings etc. *Patna College Magazine*, Vol. XXXVI, p. 6.



gave lectures in the Calcutta, Jadavpur, Magadh, Patna and other universities as well as in several colleges.<sup>16</sup> In 1950 he had been invited to the ninth session of the Inter-national Congress of Historical Sciences in Paris,<sup>17</sup> but he did not like to travel abroad.

Combining good teaching with appreciable research and heavy administrative responsibilities is no joke. If Dr. Datta could combine these for a long time<sup>18</sup> in spite of his frail body it was mainly because of his regular habits and strong spirit. According to one of his neighbours<sup>19</sup> he studied ten to twelve hours per day and even while washing his hands he would brood over some problems of research. He would always prepare for his lecture sincerely and give the exact references and a detailed bibliography to his students.

Dr. Datta had a strong faith in God and fate. So he took any bereavement or natural calamity as the will of God. Small wonder that in spite of several deaths in his family he continued to teach and write as usual and by 1944 he was one of the few leading historians of India.<sup>20</sup>

As the principal of the Patna College (1958-60) he maintained "in full the rich and fruitful traditions of scholar-principals like McCrindle, C. R. Wilson" and others.<sup>21</sup> After Superannuation from the Government service in 1960 he became the Director of the K. P. Jayaswal Research Institute at Patna and continued to act as the Honorary Director of the Bihar State Archives.<sup>22</sup> Then in 1962 he got the first and the last assignment outside Patna; he was appointed the first Vice-Chancellor for six years.

These nine years, though representing the zenith of Dr. Datta's academic career, also proved for him the period of a terrible mental strain and at times humiliation and insults. This was partly because

16 Sarkar, *op.cit.*, p. xxiv; also, B. K. Sinha, *op.cit.*, p. xvii.

17 J. N. Sarkar and J. C. Jha, *History of the Patna College*, Patna, 1963, p. 142.

18 He did active teaching for 28 years and even when he was he Vice-Chancellor of the Magadh University and then of the Patna University for nine years, he lectured from time to time.

19 S. R. Jha, "Reminiscences of my stay in the Patna College", *P. U. Golden Jubilee Souvenir*, 1971, p. 134.

20 He had six books and forty research papers to his credit by then: *P. U. Silver Jubilee Souvenir Volume*, Patna, Nov. 1944, pp. 71-74.

21 Sarkar, *op. cit.*, p. xxiii.

22 Sinha, *op. cit.*, p. iii.



the student unrest and trade unionism among the teaching staff had begun in a big way, and partly because Dr. Datta could not resist the pressure of the politicians who had got him these high posts. As his friend and colleague, Dr. Jagadish Narayan Sarkar says, "It was not always a matter of smooth sailing, for administration cannot be wholly divorced from politics."<sup>23</sup>

The Magadh University Enquiry Commission and the Patna University Commission in the 1960s passed strictures on the style of the working of Dr. Datta as the Vice-Chancellor.<sup>24</sup> According to the *Indian Nation*,<sup>25</sup> a Patna Daily, he changed his orders three times a day.

In short, Dr. Datta will not be remembered for his various administrative assignments.<sup>26</sup> What makes his name to conjure with is his large number of research publications. In a span of five decades he published about thirty books and about 130 papers. He believed that a true history is "certainly not a mere narrative of the kings or the courts and of the military generals and their fightings" but it should be concerned with the people, "their ideals and thoughts, their aspirations and achievements, their social life, education and culture, and their problems of weal and woe."<sup>27</sup>

Dr. Datta's research methodology belonged to "the orthodox scientific school of research, sired by Sir Jadunath Sarkar collecting all available sources, critically studying them, to draw conclusions presented in the extremely lucid and highly readable style."<sup>28</sup> According to

<sup>23</sup> Sarkar, *op. cit.*, p. xxiii.

<sup>24</sup> V. C. P. Chaudhary, *Secularism Versus Communalism*, Navadhara Samiti, Patna, 1977, p. 34.

<sup>25</sup> 15 July, 1969. Also see the *Proceedings of the Patna University Senate*, 1969-70, Nov. 1969 and March 1970. Also, *Bihar Legislative Council Proceedings*, part 43, 1 April 1970.

<sup>26</sup> Even the Sarojini Gold medal in his mother's name for the best writer of a historical essay in an academic session and the Dr. K. K. Datta Inter-hostel Football Tournament have ceased to have any importance (see *Patna College Magazine*, 1961-62).

<sup>27</sup> *Proceedings of the Summer School for Undergraduate History Teaching*, History Department, Patna University, 1965 (Patna, 1966).

<sup>28</sup> Sarkar, *op. cit.*, p. xxii.



Dr. B. P. Sinha, "What Sir Jadunath had done for India for research in history Dr. Datta has done for Bihar."<sup>29</sup>

Dr. Jagadish Narayan Sarkar and Dr. Somnath Roy think that Dr. Datta set up his own school of research.<sup>30</sup> The Marxist historians of Bihar will hardly agree with this sweeping statement. In fact, some of Dr. Datta's critics point out that his writing contains many long quotations and there is more of narration and description than of analysis. There is very little use of controlled imagination and at times Dr. Datta seems to believe that the facts speak for themselves.

Among Dr. Datta's critics the most vocal is Dr. V. C. P. Chaudhary of the K. P. Jayaswal Institute, Patna who had even filed a case against him. Dr. Chaudhary says Dr. Datta did not properly analyse the causes of the separation of Bihar from Bengal in 1912,<sup>31</sup> ignoring the claims of the Biharis in the matter of employment, etc. Dr. Chaudhary particularly attacks Dr. Datta's two textbooks, both written in collaboration with other scholars. He alleges that Dr. Datta called the rising of 1857 a 'mutiny' in his pre-independence publications, but changed his stance in the government sponsored works of 1957.<sup>32</sup>

Perhaps both the extreme views are wrong; neither a school of research was set up by Dr. Datta nor did he change his stance without any reason. Indeed, the past does not change but the present does, and so the history writing is a continuing process. No wonder Dr. Datta republished some of his books with necessary corrections and elaborations.

Dr. Datta's publications may be divided into the following categories: (1) the text books; (2) the Research works on Bengal and Bihar; (3) the edited works; and (4) the publications of his lectures on certain themes.

In the first category there are two books. *A Text book of Modern Indian History* (The Indian Press Ltd., Allahabad, 1932) was written in collaboration with Dr. S. C. Sarkar, the 'godfather' of Dr. Datta.

<sup>29</sup> Sinha, *op.cit.*, p. 112.

<sup>30</sup> Sarkar, *op. cit.*, p. xxii; Roy, *Recent Historical Studies About Modern Bihar*, Calcutta, 1978, p. 2. In the methodology the influence of Dr. Datta "is very apparent" in the writings of those who belong to this "Datta School of Historians".

<sup>31</sup> *The Creation of Modern Bihar*, Patna, 1364, Preface.

<sup>32</sup> *Secularism Versus Communalism*, *op. cit.*, pp.37, 58,60-61.



Strangely enough, this cooperative work includes the Mughal period in 'Modern India'.<sup>33</sup> But it became an instant success and a money-spinner because it departed from the traditional method of treating history as the "exploits of heroes, kings and emperors" and dealt with the broader movements, taking into account the life and aspirations of the general masses also.<sup>34</sup> Since it was a bulky book it was later abridged and in 1979 the Banipith Granthalaya of Calcutta republished it. Curiously enough, the third edition, "thoroughly revised and enlarged", gave the impression that S. C. Sarkar was still alive.

The second textbook, *An Advanced History of India*, (Macmillan & Co., Calcutta, 1946) was written in collaboration with R.C. Majumdar and H. C. Raichoudhuri. It gave a good general historical account, but could not fully meet the requirements of the good Honours students.<sup>35</sup> Among the merits of the book may be listed its elegant style and the absence of jingoism.<sup>36</sup> Dr. Datta has not only written chapters on Modern India but also on the medieval period. To illustrate his objectivity we may refer to calling Robert Clive "a happy combination of high idealism and sound practical sense" and at the same time describing Tipu Sultan as "a remarkable personality in Indian History"—a man of "sound moral character, free from the prevailing vices of his class."<sup>37</sup> No wonder H. G. Rawlinson called the book "a model of accurate, up-to-date scholarship" which should "prove indispensable to the serious students of the subject."

Among the research monographs on the history of Bengal and Bihar Dr. Datta's three major works were published in the 1930s. In 1936 came out *Studies in the History of Bengal Subah (1740-1770)*. It deals mainly with the social and economic aspects. Based on the contemporary literature, the accounts of the travellers and officials and the records of the English East India Company, it focusses on the state of land and water communications, markets and prices, the condition of

33 S.R. Singh, 'Text books and Survey books on Modern Indian History for Undergraduate Students', *Proceedings of the Summer School, op.cit.*, p. 63.

34 *Ibid.* Also see preface to the first edition. The books on Modern India in circulation suffered from "inadequate documentation" and followed the "old plan of 'formal' chronological presentation of matters, e.g. reign by reign."

35 H. L. Singh, "Teaching in Modern Indian History", *Proceedings of the Summer School, op.cit.*, p. 52.

36 S.R. Singh, *op.cit.*, p. 63.

37 *Ibid.*



labour, etc. Surendranath Sen called it "an excellent book of reference".<sup>38</sup> He also described it as "a few chips" from Datta's workshop which was churning the history of Bengal in the 18th century at the moment.<sup>39</sup> Even though not a systematic survey of the political and economic history of the province, it threw new light on some of the least known aspects of its social history. Even Cotton thought that it represented "a distinct and valuable contribution to the history of the period" and H. G. Rawlinson called it "a mine of information," excellently documented, thoroughly up-to-date and "studiously impartial in its tone."

*Educational and Social Amelioration of Women in Pre-Mutiny India* (Law Press, Patna, 1936) threw a flood of light on the reforms in the fields of education, widow-remarriage and the abolition of the custom of *sati*. Based on the contemporary sources and the biographies of some eminent men, it created a niche for Dr. Datta in the field of historical research.

Dr. Datta's Ph.D. thesis was first published by the University of Calcutta in 1939 as *Alivardi and His Times*. He thanked Jadunath Sarkar for his guidance<sup>40</sup> and his teachers in his *alma mater* for their encouragement.

The second edition of *Alivardi and His Times* (The World Press Pvt. Ltd., Calcutta, 1963) incorporated some new materials from the English and Persian sources. It drew our attention to the political turmoil in Bihar and Bengal in the pre-Plassey period. The repeated Maratha onslaughts and the growing selfish ambition of the foreign trading companies eventually led to the political and economic ruin of the province. The deteriorating influence on the literature and society was apparent.<sup>41</sup> The Afghans also helped in the process of the decline of the Mughal empire.<sup>42</sup>

The book on Alivardi was indeed the best work of Dr. Datta. No wonder the great public man of Bihar, Sachchidanand Sinha, called it "a masterpiece." The next decade began with the publication of

38 Foreword, *Studies in the History of Bengal Subah, 1740-1770*.

39 *Ibid.*

40 Preface, *Alivardi and His Times*.

41 *Ibid.*, p. 210.

42 *Ibid.*, p. 114.



*The Santal Insurrection of 1855-57* (Calcutta University, 1940), cataloguing the social and economic grievances of these aborigines. Even though a pioneering attempt at writing a history of the tribals by a historian born and brought up in the Santhal Parganas, and based on some original records, this study was descriptive rather than analytical. It ignored the tribal folklores and a novel entitled *Harma's Village* by R. Carstairs, inspired by the Santal Insurrection was published by the Santal Mission Press, Pokhuria, Manbhum, in 1935.

In fact, K. K. Basu who wrote a paper on 'The Santal Outbreak in Bhagalpur' in 1934<sup>43</sup> in which year Dr. Datta had published his first paper on the same theme,<sup>44</sup> gave, unlike Dr. Datta, some interesting features of the land and people of the Damin-i-Koh which later became a part of the district of the Santhal Parganas.

Dr. Datta did not even care to see Carstairs' memoirs published in 1912 nor Mac Pherson's *Settlement Report*, giving a detailed account of the Santals before and after their rising of 1855. Dr. Datta did not look up another sympathetic work entitled *Chotrae Desmanjhir eak Katha* (Santal Mission of Northern Churches, 1938). Chotrae as a lad of 14 or 15 had participated in the Santal rising, but since he wrote in Santali Dr. Datta did not care to touch it.

Among the causes of the insurrection the emphasis of Dr. Datta was on the anti-mahajan (moneylender) stance of the rebels, while the anti-British dimension of the rebellion was underplayed, presumably because it was risky for a member of the Bihar Education Service to offend the alien rulers.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>43</sup> *JBORS*, Vol. 20, no. 2.

<sup>44</sup> He presented it at the 7th All-India Oriental Conference at Baroda and then published it in the *Bengal, Past and Present*, Vol. 48, no. 4, serial no. 95-99, July-December, 1934.

<sup>45</sup> J. C. Jha, 'Recent Trends in the Historiography of Modern Tribal Bihar' (mimeographed paper presented in a seminar on the occasion of the K.P. Jayaswal centenary celebrations in Santiniketan), November 1981. In 1945 G. Archer and W.J. Culshaw in their paper ('The Santhal Rebellion' *Man in India*, Vol. 25 no. 4, Ranchi, December 1945) quoted from E. G. Man's *Sonthalia and the Sonthals*, London, 1867 to prove that the ignorance and the inexperience of the British authorities in dealing with the primitive tribes was an important cause of the rebellion.



*The Dutch in Bengal and Bihar, 1740-1825* was published by the Patna University in 1948. Referring to this achievement, the *Patna College Magazine*<sup>46</sup> remarked that Dr. Datta was maintaining the tradition of research in his department. Based on the unpublished official documents, the book throws sufficient light on the fortunes of the Dutch settlements in the era of the Napoleonic wars. Dr. Datta, however, admits that he has not been able to present<sup>47</sup> a complete picture of the decline of the Dutch influence in Bengal and other parts of India.

Dr. Datta was fortunate enough to have several of his books printed by his *alma mater* as well as by the Patna University, and later he was able to have their second editions from some commercial firms whom he patronised in many ways. But he was even more lucky to get 'instant' histories like *India's March to Freedom* (Orient Longmans Ltd., 1949) printed soon after independence. This booklet deals with the various plans and proposals floated in the fateful decade before India's Independence. Based on the relevant contemporary journals and newspapers and the published constitutional documents (*The Transfer of Power* volumes published by Her Majesty's Stationary Service had not yet arrived), it is a sketchy account of an eventful period.

In the wake of the 1857 centenary celebrations Dr. Datta managed to get the Bihar government's financial support and published a few volumes. *The Biography of Kunwar Singh and Amar Singh* turned out to be a panegyric. Some of the known facts like these two heroes turning hostile to the British in 1857 due to some personal grievances were ignored or underplayed. Moreover, with the government grant Dr. Datta could get a number of research fellows and assistants to collect the materials and even sometimes to prepare the rough draft of the chapters. Besides, after presenting a rosy picture of the ancestral tree of Kunwar Singh and overplaying his valour, Dr. Datta got the sympathy and support of one particular caste of politicians in Bihar.

46 Apl. 1947, editorial: It also referred to his radio broadcast on 'the rescue of historical records in Bihar'.

47 2nd edition, Motilal Banarsidas, Patna-Delhi, 1968 Preface.



Dr. Datta's *History of the Freedom Movement in Bihar*<sup>48</sup> contained, he claimed, a lot of philosophy of history. He also said that the publication was the fulfilment of a mission — a great education too.<sup>49</sup> The first volume deals with the traditional form of armed rising against the British — the Wahabi and other movements. But it is wrong to treat the Tribal rebellions like the Kol Insurrection "as a part of the general freedom struggle against the British."<sup>50</sup> For this ignores the dichotomy between the tribal and non-tribal grievances and methods of protest. Indeed, Dr. Datta provides a lop-sided view of the tribal unrest.

The volume I also deals with the constitutional form of protest, starting with the Associations and covering the pre-Nehru Report phase of the freedom struggle.

The volume II deals with the protest against the Simon Commission, the salt *satyagraha* and the individual *satyagraha* and volume III touches upon the fateful years, 1942 to 1947.

These were described by a foreign critic<sup>51</sup> as "well documented and copiously illustrated" volumes, providing useful information. What the critic obviously did not know was that the photographs of all the ministers of the Bihar government in the 1950s had been included in the book, even though some of them played no part in the freedom struggle. Moreover, words like 'nigger' had not been explained. Even so, the volumes are useful and these have been translated into Hindi.<sup>52</sup>

*The Social Life and Economic Condition of India in the Eighteenth Century*<sup>53</sup> is a rehash of some of Dr. Datta's earlier works, though some new matter has been included. One may, however, wish that some new interpretations had been provided of the facts pertaining to the religious thought, education, agriculture, industries, etc.

48 3 Vols., Govt. of Bihar, Patna, 1957.

49 Preface.

50 J. C. Jha, *The Kol Insurrection of Chotanagpur*, Calcutta, 1964, Preface.  
Also see J.C. Jha, *The Bhumij Revolt, 1832-33*, Delhi, 1967.

51 In the *Times Literary Supplement*, 27 March, 1959.

52 By the Bihar Hindi Granth Academy.

53 Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1961.



*A Survey of Recent Studies on Modern Indian History*<sup>54</sup> was prepared and published with a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation of the U.S.A. and its revised edition was published seven years later.<sup>55</sup> The third enlarged edition<sup>56</sup> was updated upto 1978 and a few works published after 1978 was noticed. But it is surprising that some of the well-known works on Tribal Bihar prepared during the last two decades, have been ignored. The Marxist historians have also got a raw deal. All the same, it is a helpful guide for researchers.

*Renaissance, Nationalism and Social Change in Modern India* (Bookland Ltd, Calcutta, 1965) with a Hindi version (1966) is no doubt useful for the M.A. students of Modern India group, but some of the materials are taken from one of Dr. Datta's earlier works. In any case, some minute details and long quotes could have been avoided. However, the biographies and memoirs of some eminent public men and reformers as well as the contemporary journals have been widely used.

*Shah Alam II and the East India Company* (World Press Private Ltd., Calcutta, 1965) covers the career of an unfortunate prince who at one point tried to checkmate the British in Bengal and Bihar and later became their protege. Based on the original sources in English, French, Marathi and Persian languages, it is an interesting study of a career which "excites pity but no praise or admiration."<sup>57</sup>

The *Biography of Dr. Rajendra Prasad*<sup>58</sup> dealing with his career and achievements, and *Gandhiji in Bihar*<sup>59</sup> show the same tenor as the biography of Kunwar Singh and Amar Singh: all praise and no constructive criticism.

A small book entitled *Unrest Against Bihar Rule*<sup>60</sup> was expanded into *Anti-British Plots and Movements Before 1867*<sup>61</sup> dealing with the events from the rising of Raja Chet Singh of Banaras (1780-81) to the Santal Insurrection (1855). Again, the question arises: how can we put

54 Patna University, Patna, 1957.

55 Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1964.

56 By the same publishers, 1981.

57 *Shah Alam II*, p. 127.

58 Govt. of India, 1970.

59 Govt. of Bihar, 1970.

60 Patna, 1957.

61 Meenakshi Prakashan, Meerut, 1970.



the tribal unrest in the same category as the risings of the non-tribal chiefs.

The *Life and Thought of the People of Bihar*<sup>62</sup> sheds lurid light on the life and living of the people of this backward state. However, the widening gulf between the rich and the poor, between townsmen and the villagers has not been focussed upon. Is it not relevant to find out the thinking process of the common man if we study the 'people of Bihar'?

*Siraj-ud-daulah*<sup>63</sup> cannot by any stretch of imagination be placed in the class of B. K. Gupta's *Siraj-ud-daulah and the East India Company*. All the same, Dr. Datta throws some new light on the character of this young nawab and on the basis of some contemporary sources differs from some of Jadunath Sarkar's views.

*A Social History of Modern India*<sup>64</sup> shows how with the coming of the Western ideas and systems, the educational structure and social life of India changed. Here again, some of the earlier stuff used by Dr. Datta has been put in as the old wine in a new bottle.

The works edited by Dr. Datta were usually compiled by his assistants in the Bihar State Archives or the K. P. Jayaswal Research Institute. And the introduction was provided by this eminent historian, while the cost of the publication was met by the State or the Central government.

The *Selections from the Unpublished Correspondence of the Judge-Magistrate and Judge of Patna*<sup>65</sup> contains useful records on the political administrative, socio-economic and cultural themes, found in the record room of the District Judge of Patna.

*Fort-William - India House Correspondence*, Vol. I (1740-1756) which included the records of the Government of India bearing on the Company's activities from 1748 onwards, was published by the Indian Historical Records Commission.<sup>66</sup>

*The Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi* relating to Bihar,

62 Scientific Book Agency, Calcutta, 1957. Hindi edition, Bihar Hindi Granth Akademy, 1970.

63 Orient Longman Ltd, Calcutta, 1871.

64 Macmillan Co. of India, 1975.

65 Govt. of Bihar, Patna, 1954.

66 New Delhi, 1958.



1917-47<sup>67</sup> shows how the technique of *satyagraha* was perfected in Champaran in 1917 and how Gandhi's messages of peace and harmony were received by the Bihars. It has some rare photographs of Gandhi in Bihar.

*Some Firmans Sanads and Parwanas*<sup>68</sup> covers the records bearing on the revenue and general economic themes of the period 1578 to 1802, while *Patna Commissioner's Records Serice*,<sup>69</sup> Vol. I, gives a summary of the letters in the Patna Commissioner's record room, covering the period 1853 to 1875 and throwing some light on the social, economic and administrative history of Bihar.

*Selections from the Judicial Records of the Bhagalpur District Office (1792-1805)*<sup>70</sup> contains 521 letters touching upon the achievements and failures of the early administrators in terms of the provisions of the Cornwallis system.

The third volume of *The Comprehensive History of Bihar*, (Vol. III, part II),<sup>71</sup> to which Dr. Datta also contributed some chapters, devotes some space to the tribal area of Bihar, but it fails to give a coherent account of the developments in these regions. True, the earlier tribal revolts are here placed not as a part of the larger war of independence,<sup>72</sup> but Dr. Datta without looking into Dr. Suresh Singh's book,<sup>73</sup> naively says that the agrarian troubles in Chotanagpur in the second half of the 19th century were "fomented by the Christian missionaries."<sup>74</sup>

Among the books emerging from Dr. Datta's lectures, the *Dawn of Renascent India* comes first. This publication of 1950 contains the lectures he delivered in the Nagpur University in 1949.<sup>75</sup> Since in recent years many scholars have begun to challenge the idea of renaissance in 19th century India, for our awakening, unlike that of Europe,

67 Govt. of Bihar, Patna, 1960. A similar volume edited by Dr. B. B. Misra, containing the archival materials is more helpful and better edited than Dr. Datta's.

68 Govt. of Bihar, Patna, 1962.

69 Govt. of Bihar, Patna, 1965.

70 Govt. of Bihar, Patna, 1968.

71 K. P. J. R. Institute, Patna, 1976.

72 Dr. Datta seems to have read the two books of the author of this paper.

73 *The Dust—Storm and the Hanging Mist: A Study of Birsa and his Movement in Chotanagpur (1878-1901)*, Calcutta, 1966.

74 J. C. Jha, *Historiography*, op. cit.

75 Mahadeo Hari Wathodkar Memorial Lectures.



together with religion, Dr. Datta should have revised his opinion. But the 'second enlarged edition'<sup>76</sup> sticks to the earlier thesis.

*Reflections on the Mutiny*<sup>77</sup> containing the lectures of Dr. Datta delivered in the Calcutta University, touches upon the various theories on the rising of 1857 and concludes that it was a national revolt and not a mere 'Sepoy Mutiny.' It is, in any event, not a better book than Dr. S. B. Chaudhary's on the same theme.

*Modern India and World Fellowship*<sup>78</sup> presents the Kamala Memorial lectures for 1967 delivered in the Calcutta University in 1969. Based on the published works, mostly biographies and journals, this book presents an account of modern India's contribution to the development of internationalism and world fellowship for the amelioration of the condition of the human race.

Dr. Datta's work as the Convener of the Regional Records Survey Committee of Bihar, for about two decades, especially the annual or biennial reports containing the newly discovered reports, forms a class by itself.<sup>79</sup>

Dr. Datta's articles appeared for about half a century in reputed journals in India and abroad: *The Calcutta Review*, *The Indian Historical Review*, *Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society* (later Bihar Research Society), *Bengal Past and Present*, *Journal of World History*, *Asian Culture*, *Indo-Iranica*, *Indo-Asian Culture*, and so on. He also contributed papers to the All-India Oriental Conference, and other such organisations. Besides, he wrote for the commemoration and felicitation volumes, university and college journals and even for the newspaper supplements and Sunday magazines. Most of the matter contained in these were later incorporated into books.

<sup>76</sup> Allied Publishers, New Delhi, 1964.

<sup>77</sup> Calcutta, 1966.

<sup>78</sup> Macmillan & Co. Ltd, Calcutta, 1970.

<sup>79</sup> The report for 1947-48 has the English translation of a document on the Santal Insurrection and that for 1954-55 lists some important reports on the Kol Insurrection of 1831-32.



No doubt Professor Datta was a prolific writer and such a vast amount of historical literature produced by him has made him immortal in the history of history writing. It is true that in the search for quantity, the quality of his works has at times suffered, but at a time when he thrived, there was a great need for digging out new facts on regional history. And indeed he succeeded in plugging many of the loopholes in the history of Bihar and Bengal and eventually of India. No wonder the Asiatic Society of Bengal awarded him its honorary fellowship and the Jadunath gold medal and the Bihar Research Society issued a felicitation volume to honour him.



## Biman Behari Majumdar (1899 – 1969)

BY

TARASANKAR BANERJEE

One of the remarkable exponents of the fast disappearing Victorian scholarship, Biman Behari Majumdar was born on 21st December 1899 at Nabadwip in West Bengal in the house of his maternal grandfather, the famous Vaishnava Pandit Advaita Das Babaji (originally Braja Kishore Rakshit). His parents had a rich heritage. His father Srish Chandra came from a well known aristocratic zamindar family of Kumarkhali in the district of Kusthia of modern Bangla Desh. But the huge ancestral property was lost as a result of failure of business and later consequential litigations. The family came to Nabadwip at the time of Srish Chandra and settled there. Biman Behari's mother Krishnapriya, the only daughter of Advaita Das Babaji, was a highly accomplished lady well versed in Vaishnava literature. Her collection of Vaishnava *Padavali* in a handwritten *punthi* is still existing.

Biman Behari inherited the traits of the paternal as well as maternal side no doubt, but the influence of the maternal side cast a deep imprint on his life and ideas. He owed his spiritual inclination and devotion to Vaishnava faith and movement to his mother and maternal grandfather who had evolved a new school of classical devotional music in Bengal. Biman Behari received *Diksha* in Vaishnavism at an early age from Pandit Advaita Das Babaji, and it practically transformed his life. It was through his company that Biman Behari came into contact with the well known Vaishnava scholars of the time, when he was only 16 years of age. His father Srish Chandra was a reformer of the *Kayastha* society, and through him Biman Behari came into touch with many well known aristocratic families. He married Suchitra, the youngest daughter of Kunjalal Choudhury, a leading pleader of village Kumari in the Chuadanga subdivision of modern Bangla Desh. They had three sons and two daughters who are all well placed in life.

Eldest of four brothers, Biman Behari had his early schooling in the *Pathsala* of his ancestral village, Osmanpur and then in another



school at Jangipur nearby. When the family shifted to Nabadwip in 1912, he was admitted to the local Hindu school wherefrom he passed the Entrance examination in 1917 in the 1st Division. He had all through a brilliant academic career and was the first student to graduate with 1st class Honours in History from Berhampore Krishnanath College (in Murshidabad District) in 1921. He was also placed in First Class in M.A. examination in History from Calcutta University in 1923. Incidentally, in both Honours and M. A. he stood second in the First Class with Late Susobhan Sarkar, later Professor of History, Presidency College of Calcutta, occupying the first position. He was so inspired by the lectures of Professor V. G. Kale at Patna that he studied Economics at home and appeared in the B Group (Political Science) of M. A. examination in Economics in Calcutta University in 1929. In 1932 he was awarded the Premchand Roychand Studentship for his thesis "A History of Political Thought from Rammohun to Dayananda", followed by the Mouat Medal in 1934 and Griffith Memorial Prize in 1935. In the same year he submitted his Ph.D. thesis on '*Chāitanyachariter Upadan*' in Bengali, one of the examiners of which was Rabindranath Tagore. He received the Ph.D. degree at the Convocation of the Calcutta University in 1937 — an occasion that became memorable for the address by Tagore in Bengali. For his proficiency in History, Economics, Political Science and Bengali he was nicknamed *Chaturmukh* (four faced) by his contemporaries.

Biman Behari had a successful career. He started as a Research Associate of Nagendranath Basu, the famous editor of *Visvakosh* in Bengali. After serving the K. C. College at Hetampur (Birbhum district) for a year as Lecturer in History, he joined the B. N. College at Patna in 1925, and became the Head of the Department there in 1930. In 1945 he became the Principal of H. D. Jain College at Arrah and developed it into a first grade institution. His organising and administrative abilities were well recognised in 1952 when he was appointed the first Inspector of Colleges of Bihar University from which post he retired in 1959. Later, he served the Patna University till his death on 18th November 1969, as a Professor of History under the U. G. C. retired teachers scheme. Biman Behari went to Bihar in pursuit of his career; but Bihar became his second homeland so to say. He permanently settled at Patna and was one of those domiciled Bengalees who contributed much to the development of historical studies in the state. So complete was his attachment to his newly adopted State that he named his sons in a fashion more akin to that of Bihar rather than Bengal.



Biman Behari Majumdar was a prolific writer. His first writing on Vaishnavism was published in 'Vishnupriya', a journal published under the auspices of Amrita Bazar Patrika, when he was a little above sixteen. Till his death, his untiring pen did not cease to contribute to the academic world. He was greatly influenced and inspired by some of his school and college teachers, and later by Pramathanath Banerjee of Calcutta University. A complete list of his works and writings is out of place here, but an idea of the quantum of his publications can be obtained from the fact that he had 23 major works to his credit. *History of Political Thought from Rammohun to Dayananda*, Vol. I, *Indian Political Association and Reform of Legislature*, *Militant Nationalism in India*, *Congress and Congressmen in the Pre-Gandhian Era* (in collaboration with Dr. B. P. Majumdar, his son), *History of Indian Social and Political Ideas* are some of his well known works in English. *Chaitanyachariter Upadan*, *Sodhas Satabdir Padavali Sahitya*, *Heroines of Tagore*, *Kṛṣṇa in History and Legend*, *Chaitanyamangal of Jayananda*, etc., expose the wider vision of his scholarship. Apart from a large number of articles in a wide range of subjects in standard journals, Biman Behari had written several useful text books in English, Bengal, as well as Hindi. We are here more concerned with the historical works of that versatile scholar. The last ten years of his life was highly productive from the academic point of view, and it was during this period that he gave us a few gems of works. May be that being freed from his official preoccupations on his retirement in 1959, Biman Behari invested all his time and energy in academic pursuits.

The works of Biman Behari may be classified under three broad groups: (a) Writings on Indian nationalism, (b) works on institutional history and the history of ideas, (c) writings with a bearing on Bengali literature. And it is this third category of writings which marked him out among the contemporary scholars and earned him a distinct place in the academic world. In the first category of writings — Indian Nationalism — Biman Behari had carved out a definite area of his own. He primarily interested himself in the pre-Gandhian era of Indian national movement. We do not, however, get any clue to this restricted choice. No where did Biman Behari clearly state why he did not want to go beyond the year 1917 which witnessed the gradual emergence of Gandhi in Indian political scene. The significance of 1917 is easily understood but the reasons why he did not enter into the Gandhian phase are difficult to realise. But certainly, he was not deterred by the complexity of the Gandhian phase which also posed many tricky questions of emotional commitment at times.



It appears that the choice of the historian was not negative, but a positive and deliberate one. Another interesting point was that he did not bother himself with the theoretical questions of Indian nationalism, nor with definitions of the terms involving his problems. He engaged himself in the dynamics of the Indian national movement without being plagued by any 'isms' of his period.

These features are pronounced in Biman Behari's well known work — "Militant Nationalism in India: And its Socio - Religious Background, 1897-1917", published in 1966. He has not clearly defined what he meant by 'militant nationalism.' The choice of the date lines is also interesting. The initial impact of the work on the minds of the readers may result in a sort of confusion between the two expressions — 'militant nationalism' and 'extremist politics'. But as one goes through the later chapters carefully, he will discover that the historian actually meant the cult of violence or bomb, which came to be known in English parlance as 'terrorism'. There is a difference between Biman Behari and Ramesh Chandra Majumdar regarding the issue of 'militant nationalism.' While Biman Behari connected the emergence of militant nationalism with the return of Swami Vivekananda to India in 1897, Majumdar was emphatic that militant nationalism assumed serious proportion only after the partition of Bengal which stirred the political and national consciousness in the country to a degree unknown before. Majumdar, however, noted that "the ideas of setting up secret revolutionary societies were in the air from the seventies or eighties of the 19th century; but excepting the single instance of Phadke in Bombay, they did not take any definite shape or form till the close of the century. Their activities during the first few years of the 20th century were not very notable, and it was not till the great upheaval in Bengal caused by the partition of the province, that they took deep root in the soil and developed a well knit organisation which gradually spread all over India."<sup>1</sup> To establish a link between the return of Swami Vivekananda in 1897 and the rise of militant nationalism is indeed novel as well as unorthodox. In the words of Biman Behari: "The triumphant return of Swami Vivekananda from his Western tour in 1897 opened a new era in the history of Nationalism in India," (Preface, *Militant Nationalism in India*). Biman Behari was more specific when he observed that "militant nationalism made itself manifest both in the economic and in the political fronts in 1897 ..." (Preface). But he rejected the suggestion

<sup>1</sup> R.C.Majumdar, *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, Vol. II, p. 160,



of the Sedition Committee that there was some link between the teachings of Ramakrishna as well as Vivekananda and the growth of the terrorist activities. In his 'Conclusion' at the end of "Militant Nationalism ... etc." he observed that it was "extremely doubtful if Vivekananda himself or even his disciple, Sister Nivedita, ever supported secret associations ... The revolutionaries had not the patience to carry out the suggestions of Swami Vivekananda regarding the uplift of the masses" (p. 176). By implication he, therefore, confirmed the opinion that Vivekananda's teachings were evolutionary and not revolutionary in nature. Biman Behari did not speak in the same tone as R. C. Majumdar who commented that "this militant nationalism may be regarded as a continuation of that spirit of open resistance against the British which we have traced throughout the nineteenth century."<sup>2</sup> Biman Behari exposed the limitation of militant nationalism in clear terms. He wrote: "The task which the votaries of militant nationalism set before themselves was a herculean one. A vast country entirely unarmed and emasculated by subjugation to foreign rulers, who left no opportunity of setting one community against the other and the non-Brahmins against the Brahmins, was to be emancipated. It required not only self-sacrifice of individual workers but also of a close knit organization with iron discipline" (Conclusion, p. 178). But unlike many others of his generation, he did not underrate the role of militant nationalism in the fight for freedom. He struck a remarkable balance in this regard and commented: "The independence of India has been achieved as much by constitutional agitation and non-violent non-cooperation as by militant nationalism. The heroes who dared to think of liberating an unarmed nation and sacrificed their lives for effecting the purpose are entitled to eternal gratitude of successive generations of Indians" (Conclusion, p. 179).

In collaboration with his son Dr. B. P. Majumdar, Biman Behari produced a broad-spectrum work on the Congress during the first thirty years of its existence. Here, too, the story was carried upto 1917 after which the Congress was converted into "a powerful engine of mass movement" under the "magnetic leadership" of Gandhi. This work published in 1967 may be said to be complementary to his "Militant Nationalism." The declared objective of "Congress and Congressmen in the Pre-Gandhian Era, 1885-1917" was to present "an objective history", of the Indian National Congress during that period. But the

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p.161.



observation that "this important and formative period in the history of national organisation has not received either from dispassionate scholars or from partisan writers the attention it deserves" was not tenable. On the other hand, it may be said that by the midsixties, the earlier phase of the Congress received more attention than the latter one. The great achievement of the Congress before 1917 was that "it brought together on a common platform the people of different provinces, speaking diverse languages and professing various religions."<sup>3</sup> According to Biman Behari, "the activities of the Indian National Congress before the advent of Mahatma Gandhi may approximately be described as a continuation and fulfilment of the work taken up by the earlier political associations during the half century preceding 1885." (*Congress and Congressmen*, p. 511). A list of Congressmen and condolence resolutions have been given in Part II of this work. A subjectwise list of resolutions passed by the Congress in Part III is extremely helpful for all concerned.

Biman Behari Majumdar was actually a trendsetter among modern Indian historians in the field of history of ideas. His "History of Political Thought from Rammohun to Dayananda," Vol. I, was the fruit of the Premchand Roychand Studentship of the Calcutta University, first published in 1934. This was later revised into "History of Social and Political Ideas: From Rammohun to Dayananda," the content remaining almost the same as the earlier edition. This work became a model for later scholars in the field of history of ideas — a new area of research in our country. Though there were 3 or 4 chapters relating to Western India, South India and Dayananda, the main thrust of the book was on Bengal which had been made clear in the 'Preface.' He wrote: "In this volume I have made an attempt to discover the original contribution of the Bengali thinkers to the political thought of the world. I have shown how even before Austin, Raja Rammohun made a reconciliation between the historical and analytical schools of jurisprudence and distinguished Law from Morality, how Akshay Kumar Dutta preached the Organic Theory of state before Herbert Spencer, and how he formulated the theory of state socialism in the fifties of the last century, and how Bankim Chandra presented a new theory of nationalism" (Preface). Western scholars may cast a scornful glance at these suggestions, but Biman Behari did a great job in studying the history of ideas in India at a time when many of the Indian scholars even were

<sup>3</sup> *Militant Nationalism*, p.14.



enamoured by Western achievements in the academic field. But he was quite aware of and conversant with the contemporary trends in the West, and wanted to utilise Western experience in exploring the hidden Indian treasure in the field of history of ideas. He observed that "the recent trend in historical studies in Western countries is to lay emphasis on the evolution of ideas which motivate social and cultural movements rather than on mere narration of facts and events."<sup>4</sup>

It has already been pointed out that the works with a bearing on Bengali literature made Biman Behari more famous among the academicians of his time. He did not, however, engage himself in creative literature. But his analytical works like *Chaitanyāchariter Upadan*, *Heroines of Tagore* or *Kṛṣṇa in History and Legend* would not have been possible if he had not acquired a deep insight in literature as well as classics. He was one of those historians in independent India who did not believe in any water-tight exclusive area of history beyond which a historian should not venture. Rather, his grasp over literature widened the horizon of his historical thinking for which he was never devoured by records and other official materials, a tendency so typical of the pre-1947 generations of scholars. It was not without significance that Biman Behari did his Ph. D. thesis on '*Chaitanyāchariter Upadan*', written in Bengali. It is no wonder that in later life he had been examiner of many Bengali Ph. D. theses. His *Kṛṣṇa in History and Legend* is perhaps the only work of its kind and unique among all the works of Biman Behari. Even a hurried glance at the bibliography will convince any one about his grasp over classics as well. One may not fully agree with his conclusions, but he will be struck by the happy blending of his historical insight with a vision of the ancient past. The 'Preface' provides an answer to the query why he was particularly interested in an analytical study of Krishna. He wrote: "The concepts of the life and teachings of Kṛṣṇa have probably exerted a more profound influence on the shaping of Indian art, literature, religion and philosophy than any other single idea . . .". Perhaps he was provoked by suggestions by other Indian as well as Western scholars that Krishna was not a real historical figure. He virtually thundered in the Preface: "It is difficult for the present writer to subscribe to the views of those historians who refuse to believe anything to have existed on earth until and unless its remains have been unearthed by excavations." As he himself claimed, he made an attempt in this work "to trace the develop-

4 'Preface' to *Kṛṣṇa in History and Legend*.



ment of the ideas relating to Kṛṣṇa from the days of the *Chandogya Upanishad* to the present time. He was emphatic in his 'Conclusion' that Krishna was "a real historical personage" and to describe him as "a mythical or an allegorical figure is to ignore the evidence of the whole of the ancient Indian historical tradition."

Biman Behari Majumdar's works form some sort of a bridge between old conventional researches and the emerging analytical studies since the early sixties of the present century. In a sense he symbolised a transition in modern Indian historiography in which bare political narrative gave way to more sophisticated critical works. He stood on the doorstep of the new history school in India, which is maturing from the mid sixties. In his academic pursuits Biman Behari was methodical, imaginative and thorough. He had an unusual tenacity for hard work. A critical spirit, analytical power of inference, careful marshalling of facts, coupled with his easy flow of expression marked his writings. It is clear that his methodology did not follow the old rut of historical research of his time, and his works did not either reflect what may be called a heavy repulsive scholarship. The 'heavy scholarship' aims simply at piling up information from archives and libraries and arranging them in an orderly manner but heavily laden with references and footnotes. On the other hand, the 'cut and paste' type of research may be more bulky and also informative but its very appearance will be awesome to a general reader.<sup>5</sup> Heavily scholastic works have a grim and repulsive appearance to a reader who wants to draw pleasure from the reading of history books. Readability and lucid style were the twin qualities of Biman Behari's works. He understood the simple truth that history is a delightful creation. He kept in mind that while developing the historian's craft one "should not necessarily be a dry-as-dust historian who simply performed a post-mortem of facts and documents to determine the truth that was there. He must take a living interest in what he writes and must keep in mind that his study is not meant only for the wooden rack but for a large number of people who take interest in the study of their past."<sup>6</sup> Most of his works were set in the same tune as played by a noted modern Indian historian who said: "The writing of the story is in a way more important and determines the value of the historian's work

<sup>5</sup> See Tarasankar Banerjee's article "Methodology for Modern Indian History" in *Concept of Indology*, published by Gujrat Vidyapith, 1973.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*



to a grater extent than the labour involved in the investigation and the accuracy of the data collected. As such the historian has to pay attention to form . . . . After all the historian would do well to bear in mind that history is taken by society as a part of literature. If it is not readable as a part of literature, it will not be read at all.”<sup>7</sup> It is not clear whether Biman Behari was inspired by Marc Bloch, the celebrated French historian who cautioned: “For a great many scholars, the lower margin of the page exerts a fascination bordering upon mania. It is surely absurd to overcrowd these margins, as they do, with bibliographical references which might largely have been spared . . .”<sup>8</sup> One can say that Biman Behari’s works fulfilled the expectations of Marc Bloch.

Bias is an inescapable element in the historian’s craft and Biman Behari was no exception to that rule. In his essay on *Bias in History* Trevelyan remarked: “The problem of bias is fundamental and all pervading. No one can teach or write history for ten minutes without coming in contact with the question whether he is aware of it or not. Because history is not an exact science but an interpretation of human affairs, opinion and varieties of opinion intrude as inevitable factors.”<sup>9</sup> Moreover, if we accept the assertion of Marc Bloch that “historical facts are, in essence, psychological facts,”<sup>10</sup> then the subjectivity of the historian’s mind will definitely creep in, when he selects his facts for his history. Nevertheless, it may be said that there was not much of any pronounced bias in the works of Biman Behari. A careful reader may discern two features in his works, which can definitely be called his bias. One was his attempt, at times, to rationalise his own experience that was rooted in his personal faith. This was clearly evident in his *Kṛṣṇa in History and Legend* in which he stated that he was making an attempt to trace the development of the ideas relating to Krishna as “an humble devotee of Kṛṣṇa by heredity, environment and conviction” (Preface). Secondly, anybody reading his *History of Indian Social and Political Ideas: From Rammohun to Dayananda* will get the feeling that the primary interest of the writer was to extol the excellence of the Bengali thinkers, though the caption of his work could definitely arouse a wider

<sup>7</sup> See ‘Presidential Address’ (Modern Period) of Dr. S. P. Sen at the 20th Session of Indian History Congress (1957).

<sup>8</sup> Marc Bloch, *The Historian’s Craft*, p.87.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in Tarasankar Banerjee, *op.cit.*

<sup>10</sup> Marc Bloch, *op. cit.*, p.194.



expectation of a reader. Biman Behari was, however, honest in expressing his intention. He wrote in the 'Preface': "I have made an attempt to discover the original contribution of the Bengali thinkers to the political thought of the world." But to do justice to him it must be said that he was not actually chauvinistic in his outlook and approach.

In his professional career Biman Behari received ample recognition as well as honour. He was elected President of the Indian Political Association in 1951, and presided over the 14th Session of the Indian Political Science at Hyderabad. From 1961 to 1963 he was Vice President of the Bangiya Sahitya Parishat. He was invited to deliver special endowment as well as extension lectures in several universities like Calcutta, Bombay, Jammu and Kashmir, and Visva-Bharathi. Most of those lectures had their fruition in published works. He was also President of the 'Bangiya Kayastha Samaj' and of the 'Bengalee Association' of Bihar where he had settled permanently. He was at the same time connected with several Vaishnava organisations at Nabadwip and Vrindavan.

A man of strong determination, robust optimism, and fixity of purpose, Biman Behari was charmingly sociable. His devotion to work was proverbial. He ungrudgingly helped young and serious scholars to come up in life. However, he showed some restlessness in academic exchanges and never missed any opportunity to bring home his point without caring for others' reactions. In his career he was pragmatic in his approach and did not believe in confrontations even for his own principles. Perhaps he thought that non-conformism does not lead us far. Though he wrote extensively on Indian nationalism, he himself did not take part in any political movement. However, on the academic level, he did not hesitate to criticise the British rule as a student of history; and it is said that men of the C. I. D. used to sit in his classes to take down notes. By dint of his sheer devotion to Clio, Biman Behari Majumdar has become an inalienable part of the history of history-writing in modern India.



## R. C. Majumdar and his work on South and South-East Asia : A Panoramic Review (1888-1980)

BY

H. B. SARKAR

### *A Biographical Sketch :*

Ācārya Rameśa Candra Majumdār, better known in the historical world as R. C. Majumdar (=RCM) was born in the village of Khāndārpādā, in the district of Faridpur, now in Bangladesh, on the 4th of December, 1888, in a family considered traditionally to be aristocratic in the social hierarchy of Bengal. In his *Reminiscences* published in Bengali<sup>1</sup>, he has furnished a fairly detailed account of his ancestors which he traces to the days of the English conquest of Bengal. The family originally belonged to West Bengal, but some members of the family shifted to Mulghar, a petty village in the district of Khulna (Bangladesh). A scion of this family named Harinath Majumdar became the land-lord of twenty-two parganas and bore the rājā title.<sup>2</sup> This Harinath had a step-brother named Yadavacandra who, dispossessed of his patrimony in his infancy by the intrigues of the rājā, was brought up in the remote village of Sendiya. This Yadavacandra was the direct ancestor of RCM. In the maternal line also, his family was well-connected. RCM's maternal grandfather Prasanna Kumar Sen was the sixth in descent from Mahārāja Rājavallabha who occupied a very high position at the *darbar* of Nawab Alivardi Khan and Siraj-ud-daula. Rājavallabha's palace was located at Rajnagar near Dacca (now spelt as Dhākā), but it was washed away by the Padma. Due to adverse circumstances, one of the ancestors of RCM left Sendiya and settled at Khāndārpādā which was not far off.

<sup>1</sup> *Jivaner Smṛtidipe* ('In the Light of Reminiscences of Life'), Calcutta, 1978, to be called: JS.

<sup>2</sup> Y. M. Vladimirov (ed.), *Soviet Studies of India*, New Delhi, 1974, pp. 1-11.



RCM's father Haladhar Majumdar had three sons, RCM being the youngest, and two daughters. His mother Vidhumukhi died when RCM was one and half years old. He was brought up in chill penury, but his academic career was uniformly brilliant. For economic and other reasons, he had frequently to change his school. After reading for sometime in the village school, he successively read at the South Suburban School and the General Assembly's School at Calcutta, but then he had to go to Dacca to read at the Dacca Collegiate School in 1903. In the same year, he was transferred to the Hooghly Collegiate School, but in the very following year, he had to come back to Calcutta, but before he could settle down, he had to go to Cuttack to join the Ravenshaw Collegiate School, wherefrom he appeared at the Entrance Examination of the University of Calcutta in 1905 and obtained a government scholarship. After reading for sometime at the Braja Mohan College, Barisal (Bangladesh), he came back to his old Calcutta and was admitted to the Ripon College, now called Surendra Nath College. He passed the First Arts Examination of the University of Calcutta from this College in 1907, occupying the fourth position among the successful candidates. He then joined the Presidency College, Calcutta, taking up Honours in History. He passed the B. A. examination from that college with second class Honours and got a government scholarship for post-graduate studies. He continued his studies in M. A. history at the same college and stood second in the first class in the final examination of 1911. In the following year, he submitted for the Premchand Raichand Scholarship a thesis on the Andhra-Kuṣāṇa Age; among the competitors for the same distinction were the celebrated historians of later times, namely, R. D. Banerji and N. K. Bhattasali, but RCM won the scholarship. Dr. G. Thibaut, the examiner, was highly pleased by the quality of the work. RCM had then the opportunity of becoming a Deputy Magistrate, but the serious illness of his wife Priyabala, whom he had married in November, 1908, pinned him down to Calcutta and he could not go to Darjeeling for interview, as she would otherwise be left at their residence alone. Destiny thus saved him to become one of the greatest historians of the century.

RCM entered into his professional life as a lecturer at the Dacca Training College in 1912 in the provincial cadre of government civil service and stayed at Dacca till 1914. On the invitation of Sir Asutosh Mookerji, a far-sighted academic statesman, who was planning to develop Calcutta University as a post-graduate teaching university, he joined the university as a lecturer in the Department of Ancient Indian History and Culture in July, 1914. He utilised this opportunity to prepare his



doctoral dissertation entitled *Corporate Life in Ancient India*, and the thesis was approved for the degree and published in 1918. His reputation as a teacher was considerable. In 1921, when the University of Dacca was established, he joined the University as Professor of History. He served the University from 1921 to 1936 as Professor and from 1937 to 1942 as its Vice-chancellor. When he retired from the University, he was only 54 years of age and was therefore quite fit to continue his arduous research work on South and South-East Asian history and culture. In 1950, he returned to the teaching profession on appointment as the first Principal of the College of Indology at Benares Hindu University and stayed there till 1952. In 1955 again, he assumed the charge of the Principal of the College of Indology at the Nagpur University. He also served as Visiting Professor of Indian History at the Universities of Chicago and Pennsylvania in 1958-'59.

During his crowded academic life, he delivered many endowment and extension lectures in different institutes of higher learning in India. Of these the more important ones are: (i) the Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad Honorarium lectures, Baroda, on 'Ancient Indian Colonization in South-East Asia' (ii) Adhar Mookherji Lectures at Calcutta University on 'Mahārāja Rājavallava' (iii) Rai Bahadur G. C. Ghosh and Vidyasagar Lectures at the same University on (a) 'Indian Religion' (b) 'Prose Literature in Bengal' and (c) 'Womanhood in India' (iv) Sir William Meyer Lectures, Madras University, on 'Kambujadeśa' (v) the first series of Birla Endowment Lectures at the Bharatiya Vidyabhavan, Bombay, on 'Three Phases of Indian Freedom' (vi) Extension Lectures at Visva-Bharathi, Santiniketan, on 'Glimpses of Bengal in the nineteenth Century' (vii) Kamala Lectures at Calcutta University on 'Culture of Medieval Bengal' (viii) Extension lectures at Patna University on 'Svāmī Vivekānanda' (ix) Autombapu Lectures at Imphal, Manipur, on 'Expansion of Aryan Culture in Eastern India' (x) Three lectures at B. J. Research Institute, Ahmedabad (xi) Three lectures on Historiography at the Heras Institute, Bombay (xii) Six Rabindranath Tagore Endowment Lectures at the Kerala University on 'British Impact on Hindu Culture'. The number of his published works will be over 300, of which a select list has been published in H. B. Sarkar (ed.), *R. C. Majumdar Felicitation Volume*, Calcutta, 1970.

In recognition of the outstanding work of RCM in different fields of Indology, he was awarded the Campbell Gold Medal by the Asiatic Society, Bombay; Sir William Jones and B. C. Law Gold Medals and the Rabindranath Birth Centenary Plaque by the Asiatic Society,



Calcutta; Jagattārīṇī Gold Medal, Calcutta University. He also received the Rabindra Prizes from the Govt. of West Bengal and many other prizes fetching monetary returns from other places of India and abroad.

RCM's other distinctions are too numerous to be mentioned, but the following can not be overlooked. He was the recipient of the Honorary D. Litt. degree from the Universities of Calcutta, Jadavpur, Burdwan and the Rabindrabharati University. He was also awarded the degree of Deshikottama from the Visva-Bharati University, Santiniketan. He was Honorary Fellow, Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland; Honorary Fellow and later on President, the Asiatic Society, Calcutta; Honorary Member, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona; Vice-President, International Commission for publishing a "History of Mankind—Educational, Cultural and Scientific Development" sponsored by the UNESCO; President, Indian History Congress; President, All-India Oriental Conference; President, XXII International Congress of Orientalists, Indology Section (1951). It is but fit and proper that his former pupils and his admirers have established the R. C. Majumdar Institute for Historical Research, a registered body, at Calcutta, sometime back with Professor Dr. D. C. Sircar as President and the present writer as General Secretary, and the first issue of the Journal, a six-monthly one, is under print.

*Historical Methodology Followed or Evolved :*

From the thirties some new trends are discernible in the writing of historical works, and different points of view are coming to the fore. One has to determine how far they meet the demands of historical rectitude. Scholars with nationalist or communal outlook have put stress on excessive national, regional or communal chauvinism, which is bound to be of a particular brand or nature, i. e., biased. The Marxist writers have, on the other hand, emphasised the predominant role of economic factors, but this is a point of view which is valid up to a certain point, as it can not be the sole criterion for any objective study of history. The classic land for the materialistic interpretation of history is the USSR, whose Indological aspect has been well described by Kotovsky.<sup>2</sup> The present position in Soviet Studies on the history of India has been discussed in some details by A. H. Vafa<sup>3</sup>; this, along with the former writing, lay down both the goal and the principles

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 12-27.



evolved for Soviet studies in India. Studies made by some Indian scholars seem to run on parallel, if not identical lines.

One has to emphasise the complexities of the Indian situation in regard to the writing of its history. There is no doubt that geographical compulsions have been mainly responsible for the fundamental unity of India. Regional diversities in respect of race, language, political growth, economic and social behaviour as well as cultural pattern have wrought unity in diversity.<sup>4</sup> The highly Aryanized people of South and South-East Asia have coexisted throughout the millennia — and they do so even now — with the Austric / Austro-Asiatic / Austronesian and Mongoloid elements. On this complex pattern of life, the witchcraft and various other types of superstitions of the people emanating from the spirit-world and from the unknown exerted an influence which haunted people from birth to grave. Interesting studies on this phenomenon have been made not only in regard to India, but also in regard to Burma, Thailand, Cambodia (Kampuchea), Malaya and Indonesia. When a Teg Bahadur or a Brahmin gave his head at the altar of fanaticism or an Aurangzeb or Firuz Shah Tughluq destroyed the Hindū temples, the motive force was generated by religious fanaticism, in which economic considerations had very little role to play. In this background of facts and phenomena, it is impossible to devise any uniform yardstick to cover all cases. Nehru, the architect of present-day India, though not a professional historian, had the uncanny vision to postulate correctly (*The Discovery of India*, p. 17), "Life is too complicated and as far as we can understand it, in our present state of knowledge, too illogical, for it to be confined within the four corners of a fixed doctrine." He says again (*Ibid.*, p. 42), "Anything that had the power to mould hundreds of generations, without a break, must have drawn its enduring vitality from some deep well of strength, and have had the capacity to renew that vitality from age to age."

Varying degrees of reliance has sometimes been put on traditional histories. The Paurāṇic traditions of India were subjected to critical studies by Pargiter, as these could further be checked by Buddhist and Jain sources of informations, but the political history of ancient India from the ascension of Parīkṣit to the advent of the Nandas, as drawn by H. C. Raychaudhuri in his *Political History of Ancient India*, has generally been ignored by scholars. The *Kulaji* traditional accounts,

<sup>4</sup> R. K. Mookerji, *Fundamental Unity of India*, Calcutta, 1914; D.D.Kosambi, *The Culture and Civilization of Ancient India*, p. 1.



which draw up the genealogical stories of notable families in particular regions of India have not also evoked trust. RCM has discussed some fourteen *Kulaji*-texts of Bengal and concluded that there are no genuine *Kulaji*-texts that can be dated before the latter half of the fifteenth century and that these texts have been tampered with in various ways, while there are grounds for doubting the authenticity of many of the current texts<sup>5</sup>. The Burmese, Mon and Indonesian traditions regarding earlier times may have some grains of truth in tons of fiction,<sup>6</sup> but it is always difficult to find out the grain from the chaff. Under the circumstances, many historians would like to fight shy of them.

A new dimension has been added to such studies by C. C. Berg above all in regard to Indonesian studies.<sup>7</sup> His evaluation of the source-materials for certain periods of Javanese history, specially in regard to the Singhasari (1222-1292) and the Majapahitan periods (1292-c. 1500), had hardly been accepted by historians. While the general body of scholars like Krom, RCM, Coedès, Bosch, de Casparis, for example, considered the evidence of the contemporary inscriptions, the *Nāgarakṛtāgama* (1365) and the factual statements in the *Pararaton* as of primary importance. Berg elevated the value of the traditional accounts, as recorded, for example, in the *Babad Tanah Djawi*, the *Pustaka Raja*, etc.,<sup>8</sup> which are far removed from the times they write about. It has already been pointed out by J. G. de Casparis<sup>9</sup> that the

5. R. C. Majumdar (ed.), *History of Bengal*, Vol. I, (Dacca University), pp. 623 ff.; R. C. Majumdar, *History of Ancient Bengal*, pp. 469-81.

6. For Burmese traditional History, vide A.P. Phayre, *History of Burma*, pp. 2 ff; Pe Maung Tin and G.H. Luce, *The Glass Palace Chronicle of the Kings of Burma* (see the earlier portion); H.L. Shorto, 'A Mon genealogy of Kings: Observations on the Nidāna Ārambhakathā' in D. G. E. Hall (ed.), *Historians of South-East Asia*, pp. 63 ff.; H. B. Sarkar, *Literary Heritage of South-East Asia*, p. 232, with references therein, and C. C. Berg: (i) 'Inleiding tot de studie van het Oud-Javaansche', pp. 159-62 with references therein; (ii) 'De Midden-Javaansche Historische Traditie'; (iii) 'Javaansche Geschied-schrijving' in F. W. Stapel, *Geschiedenis van Nederlandsch Indie*, II, pp. 7-148. For a bibliography of Berg's main works, vide E.M. Uhlenbeck, *A Critical Survey of Studies on the Languages of Java and Madura*, pp. 127-132.

7 The evolution of Berg's ideas on the subject may be studied in the works cited under note 6 above.

8 For a detailed discussion of the points, vide, J. G. de Casparis in D.G.E. Hall (ed), *l. c.*, pp. 159 ff.

9 In the article cited under note 8 above. The thesis propounded by Berg, in spite of the vast learning displayed in its preparation, has failed to impress the historians in general and has been subjected to strong criticism by Bosch (*Vide Bijdr.*, *Kon. Inst.*, 112 [1956], pp. 1-24 and J. G. de Casparis, *l. c.*, particularly pp. 159 ff. with footnotes,



acceptance of the proposition of Berg will make Airlangga's ancestors (including Sindok) a fiction, the division of the empire of Airlangga and the reigns of the first two kings of Singhasari a myth, while the glamour of the Majapahitan empire, built up from historical sources, as we understand them, will be dangerously blurred.<sup>10</sup>

Now, under the complex situation described above, a level-headed historian can not be blamed if he shuns a doctrinaire approach, pre-conceived notions and allows the contemporary materials to tell their tale whether disagreeable or honourable for the country. These materials are culled from contemporary epigraphy, numismatics, palaeography, literary works, travellers' accounts, archaeological works etc. The earlier generation of Asian historians, to which belonged great scholars like Sir R. G. Bhandarkar, D. R. Bhandarkar, Sir J. N. Sarkar, G. S. Sardesai, K. A. Nilakanta Sastri of India, Pe Maung Tin of Burma, Prince Damrong of Thailand, R. Ng. Poerbatjaraka of Indonesia, have handled the source-materials to establish unvarnished truth and nothing but truth. In this matter, RCM has followed in the footsteps of his senior contemporary Sir J. N. Sarkar, whose views on the subject he has approvingly quoted on various occasions. Thus we read in his *History of Medieval Bengal* (Preface, p. x): "I would not care whether truth is pleasant or unpleasant, and in consonance with or opposed to current views. I would not mind in the least whether truth is or is not a blow to the glory of my country. If necessary, I shall bear in patience the ridicule and slander of friends and society for the sake of preaching truth. But still I shall seek truth, understand truth, and accept truth. This should be the firm resolve of a historian."

Fortunately for us, in various places of his numerous works, RCM himself has discussed not only his views regarding the ideals which an historian must try to achieve as far as possible, but also the methodology to be pursued in writing such history. In his preface to Vol. VI and Vol. XI (p. xxx), he says that he has observed three fundamental principles in editing the eleven volumes of the Vidyabhavan series of works entitled: *History and Culture of the Indian People*. These are, in his own words, "Firstly, that history is no respecter of persons or communities, secondly, that its sole aim is to find out the truth by following the canons commonly accepted as sound by all historians; and thirdly, to express the truth, without fear, envy,

<sup>10</sup> For details in this regard, vide Bosch in *Bijdr. Kon. Inst.*, referred to above p. 1, footnote 1 and J. G. de Casparis *l. c.* particularly footnotes 224 and 225.



malice, passion and prejudice and irrespective of all extraneous considerations, both political and humane. In judging any remark or opinion expressed in such a history, the question to be asked is not whether it is pleasant or unpleasant, mild or strong, impolitic or imprudent, and favourable or unfavourable to national interest or national policy as conceived by the ruling group, but simply whether it is true or false, just or unjust, and above all, whether it is or is not supported by evidence at our disposal. "In his view, the devotees of all branches of knowledge, whether natural sciences or history, are "mere pilgrims to the shrine of the goddess of truth, trudging along painfully, stage by stage, to a goal which allures them, but always eludes their grasp."

RCM has also himself discussed the methodology he pursued in writing his historical works. He says: "As the principal objective of history is to find out what actually happened and everything else is dependent upon or subservient to it, the first task of a historian is to collect facts from all sources. This he should do in a detached spirit, without having any preconceived notion about the nature of any incident or movement. He should not try to collect facts merely to support any particular theory, but strive, to his utmost, to find out everything that is likely to throw any light on the question at issue. He should keep his mind open and be prepared to accept the conclusions to which the facts lead . . . . He should give preference to eye-witnesses and contemporary evidence over late chronicles and documents, and reject popular beliefs, unless they are corroborated by more reliable evidence."

#### *A Study of Bias:*

RCM has also himself noted that every age looks towards the past sometimes critically, sometimes with admiration according to our knowledge of the past. We can say that this knowledge can come only from a full survey of the existing materials. Those who can do so — and their number is exceedingly small in every country — can have an image of the past projected on their mental horizon. Those who cannot, can have only a partial or distorted image of the past. If such less informed persons become vociferous, they become a danger alike to history and the common man and even to the intelligent man who has neither the time nor the energy to assess the validity of the assertions made. In order therefore to place men and things in proper perspective, a true historian must have full command over his sources. RCM is the only historian of India, past or present, who had command



over the materials of all the three phases of Indian history in their meticulous details and also over the Pre-European period of South-East Asian History and Culture. He had a prodigious memory, strong common sense, and everywhere he has handled the materials with utmost detachment as required of a true historian.

Some scholars of East and West have charged RCM as expressing a nationalistic point of view when he, as well as K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, described the Indianized states of South-East Asia as 'Hindu Colonies.' In regard to Java, N. J. Krom used the term Hindu-Javanese ('Hindoe-Javaansche') to denote the Indo-Javanese culture of Java, laying stress on the Indian component of that culture. A very good exposition of that phenomenon has been furnished by him in his *Het oude Java en zijn kunst* (2nd edn. 1943), chap. I. pp.1-39. In the tenth century A.D., when Islam was not yet a political or cultural force in South-East Asia, we could hardly think of South-East Asia of the time without the Indian art of writing, literature, law-books, statecraft, deification of monarchs, royal paraphernalia, Indian religion, social system, art and architecture. Not unnaturally, late medieval Arabic authors like Yāqūt (*Marāṣid al-iṭṭila*, *al-Mushtarik*) and Bakūwī described the great port Kalah (al-Qal 'ah) of Malaya as "the first country in India." It is easy to drift with the tide of resurgent nationalism visible in many parts of Asia, but well-documented facts and phenomena as well as relics of the past are eloquent witnesses of the past, and since no culture is born Minerva-like armed at all points from the start, RCM was not unjustified in using the term 'colony' in the sense of a cultural colony. Association of the Europeans with the term in an exploitive sense in modern times has given a bad odour to the expression, but no Indian scholar has used the term in the sense of political domination. In this connection, it will be worthwhile to quote from G. Coedès, a great contemporary of RCM and sympathetic interpreter of South-East Asian History and Culture, who said ('The Indianized States of South-East Asia' p. 252), "It (i. e. South-East Asia) has not entered history except to the extent that it was civilized by India. Without India, its past would be almost unknown: we would know scarcely more about it than we know about the past of New Guinea or Australia. Even though the countries whose history is outlined in this work owe everything from their titles of nobility to their privilege of possessing a history to India, it would be unjust to pass silently over what further India contributed indirectly in exchange. First of all, the region gave the Indians the feeling of having been, in the noblest sense of the term, a great colonizing people, in spite of all the ritual obstacle and racial prejudices that would seem to have



prohibited them from playing such a role. The expansive power of their culture and the dynamism of their civilization, of which the Indians seem never to have been completely conscious, manifested themselves in all the countries to which they emigrated."

In regard to India, RCM as a true historian has not failed to castigate the Indians, including the Bengalees, for the loss of their national character in different epochs of their recorded history. A nation becomes great only when a large segment of the population attains high excellence in national ethos and the genius of the people bursts forth in creative efforts in various fields of arts and sciences as well as in trade and commerce. These enrich the cultural heritage of mankind, as it did in the days of Periclean Greece, Augustan Rome, T'ai Tsung's China, Mamun's Baghdad, Candragupta II's India, Elizabethan (I) England, Akbar and Gandhi's India. But this freak of history which makes a nation great does not long survive this period of greatness. As an unbiased historian, RCM has blamed the Hindus and the Muslims alike for their failures in crucial moments of history. Fights between Hindu rulers, as well as between Muslim rulers have often taken place in the medieval period. Referring to the frontal attack of a Hindu Kingdom by a Muslim invader and a Hindu ruler from the rear, RCM has observed in one place,<sup>11</sup> "It may seem ungracious to emphasise this humiliating and degrading aspect of Hindu character, but no nation can hope to survive if it seeks to avoid truth or fears to face it, and fails to learn the lesson of history."

Discussing the reason for the downfall of many Hindu kingdoms at the onslaught of Islam, he says again: "National consciousness, love of country, and pride of freedom were smothered under the weight of a mass of rituals and social conventions, a petty minded vanity and narrow selfishness. Add to this the not infrequent cases of treason and treachery on the part of ministers and other officials and we shall have a fair picture."

Some aspects of the observations of RCM remarkably fit in with the statements made by Al-Birūnī (A. D. 1030), who says: "The Hindus believe that there is no country like theirs, no nation like theirs, no king like theirs, no religion like theirs. They are haughty, foolish, vain, self-conceited and stolid .... If they travelled and mixed with other

<sup>11</sup> Vide R. C. Majumdar in *History and Culture of the Indian People*, V, p. xlvi and p. 401.



nations, they would soon change their mind, for their ancestors were not as narrow-minded as the present generation is." <sup>12</sup>

Regarding the medieval and early modern periods of Indian history and culture, the historians have to face the intricate problems of the Hindu-Muslim relationship, which ultimately led to the partition of this sub-continent in 1947. One may enter into endless discussions to propound the view that RCM was biased against the Muslims of India. I have discussed the ideals and methodology of RCM as an historian. If one believes in what he has stated so boldly and unambiguously, one can not accuse him of any bias in this regard, as his own writings bear ample evidence of his conscious effort to remove unjustified stigma from the character of some Muslim historical figures. While he has done this, he has also tried to find out the solution to the riddle: why the Hindus and the Muslims even after living in the same country and very often as neighbours for over 700 years had to part company in 1947? The establishment of Pakistan as a sovereign state is the most emphatic proof, according to RCM, that the two great communities of India have mingled in the fringe areas of their socio-religious life, but not in fundamentals. Consequently, to use a metaphor, the Muslims have lived like clusters of islands in the ocean of Hinduism. It is the job of the historian to point out the unsatisfactory nature of the situation; it is the job of the politicians and administrators to rectify the follies of our ancestors and lay the matrix of a cohesive Hindu Muslim fraternal society.

Now, keeping the ideals and methodology of a historian's job in the perspective, RCM has studied the records bearing on Hindu-Muslim relationship down the centuries in a dispassionate analytical way and has tried to show how this relationship was conditioned by the religious prescriptions of the *Qur'ān*, the *Hadis* and the *Shar'*. If the Shias and the Sunnis living under the same body-politic faced and still face bloody encounters and group consciousness foments them in some places to break away from the parent state even now, as for instance, in a segment of the Philippines and in Cyprus, how much more unbearable could have been the condition of the Hindus under bigoted Muslim rulers in an unenlightened age? If RCM has described the brutalities of some Muslim rulers of medieval India, he has also lavished praise in unequivocal terms. He has said, "The ultra-democratic social ideas of the Muslims, though confined to their own religious community, were an

<sup>12</sup> E. C. Sachau, *Alberuni's India*, I, p. 22.



object lesson of equality, fraternity, which Europe . . . learnt at a great cost only in the 19th century."<sup>13</sup> He has stated in the same breath, "The liberal spirit of toleration and reverence for all religions preached and practised by the Hindus is still an ideal and despair of the civilised mankind . . . . The Hindus combined catholicity in religious outlook with bigotry in social ethics, while the Muslims displayed equal bigotry in religious ideas with catholicity in social behaviour." We may however observe in this connection that the introduction of Islam in Malaya and Indonesia was also attended with fire and sword,<sup>14</sup> but once it had settled down, its mellowed, tolerant and humane qualities evoked unstinted praise from all right-thinking people.

The Indians, Hindus and Muslims, forgot the past lessons of their history and repeated their mistakes on a massive scale at the time of the foundation of British power in India. As the first tentacles of foreign domination gripped Bengal, their worst features were also revealed here. RCM has not exonerated the Bengalees for their guilt in this matter. Indeed, regarding the Bengalee character of the time at the upper level of the society, he has scathingly remarked,<sup>14</sup> "The common features of the Bengalee character at the time were treachery, falsehood, cruelty, crookedness, selfishness, luxury and sensuality. The people of Bengal . . . both Hindus and Muslims . . . had sunk to the lowest depth of degradation in character and that was the reason for the downfall and degradation of Bengal. It was not the sudden defeat in the Battle of Plassey that had caused it; its seeds had been germinating for long period before it." RCM has also made some scathing remarks against some of the great historical figures of the time. Thus, in his assessment of Maharaja Nandakumar, whose statue now adorns one of the Parks of Calcutta, he has observed that the Mahārāja has been hailed in present times as a patriot who had conspired to drive away the English and his death by hanging was nothing less than martyrdom. As against this popular view, RCM has stated, "Needless to say he was sentenced on a charge of forgery and his attempts to drive away the English were not even whispered at the trial . . . nobody during all these years credited him with having sacrificed his life for his country. He had conspired with the English against his master Sirāj-ud-Daulā, then with Mīr Jāfar against the English, and lastly, he conspired with Mīr Qāsim against

<sup>13</sup> R. C. Majumdar in *l. c.*, VI, pp. 616, 617.

<sup>14</sup> R. C. Majumdar, *History of Medieval Bengal*, p. 175; see also *Ibid.*, pp. 243, 244.



Mīr Jāfar. It would therefore not be unreasonable to hold that he was by nature a man who was always after serving his own interest.”<sup>15</sup>

Even as he has tried to handle the Hindu actors of the political drama impartially, he has not also failed in his task of clearing up the portraiture of a Muslim warrior dusted by the great Bengali novelist Bankim Chandra Chatterji, no doubt due to the paucity of data he commended at that time. Regarding Takī Khān, the great General of Nawab Mīr Qāsim, who fought a great battle at Katwa on July 19, 1763, RCM has stated,<sup>16</sup> “Takī Khan’s courage and character shine brighter by a comparison with that of other commanders. It is a pity that in his novel *Chandraśekhara*, Bankim Chandra Chatterji has painted the portrait of Takī Khān in very black colour which is un-historical and wholly imaginary. It is in order to wipe out, to a certain extent, the stain . . . that his act and conduct have been described in some detail.”

In dealing with modern history, he has however admitted his limitations. He has stated in one place:<sup>17</sup> “It deals with some leading figures who are still alive or have died during the life time of most of my readers. Passions and prejudices die hard and personal opinions once formed are not likely to be altered soon. It is not therefore unlikely that the views I have expressed may not commend themselves to any and perhaps a large section of my countrymen would bitterly resent some of them. But I find consolation in the saying of the greatest of the Sanskrit poets to the effect that “there may be somewhere at sometime, somebody who would agree with my view and appreciate them; for time is eternal and the world is wide and large.” He says further that “I have always tried to tell the truth, and in doing so, followed no other guide than the light of my own judgment sincerely formed with malice to none and goodwill to all, and without any personal or ulterior motive of any kind.” A study of his numerous works will convince any one that his claim was not unjustified.

#### *A Panoramic Review of his Historical Works:*

An appreciative critique of Mughal art and architecture had observed that the Mughal architects designed like giants and finished

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 130-131.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 144-145.

<sup>17</sup> R. C. Majumdar in *History and Culture of the Indian People*, III, preface.



like jewellers. In the field of historical studies on South and South-East Asia one can pay a similar tribute to RCM, who had a canvas of continental dimension, in which he has depicted the story of the rise, growth and decline of states with a wealth of details which must be the despair of many seasoned historians. Two series of his works, namely (i) *Ancient Indian colonies in the Far East* and (ii) *History and Culture of the Indian People*, the former in three major volumes and smaller works, and the latter in eleven major volumes are monumental in their conception, dimension and execution. No other Indian scholar past or present, has covered such a vast area with so much ease and authority. Apart from mature judgment, they bear the imprint of his fairmindedness, strong common sense and ability to consult the original sources. He has discussed Indian palaeography while editing different inscriptions of India, nor has the art of writing in Campā<sup>18</sup> and Cambodia<sup>19</sup> escaped his attention. His studies on the art and archaeology of Campā as well as of Indonesia do not always help us to understand the exact relationship of this art with that of India, but the description of the monuments and of the sculptural art is very often sumptuous. His work in the field of numismatics is not large, but his systematic study of the coins and chronology of the Tripura and Coochbehar monarchs is a model of painstaking research work on a little known subject. His studies on the eras and chronology of monarchs were not confined to India alone, but comprised Nepal and some parts of South-East Asia also.

R. C. Majumdar got his Premchand Raichand Scholarship on the presentation of his dissertation on the "Andhra-Kuṣāṇa Age" (B. C. 200–A. D. 200) in 1912. More important was his Ph. D. thesis entitled "Corporate life in Ancient India", published in 1918 (second revised edition in 1922). In the introduction to this work he has stated, "It will establish beyond doubt that religion did not engross the whole or even an undue proportion of the public attention and that, the corporate activity manifested in this connection was by no means an isolated factor, but merely an aspect of that spirit which pervaded all other spheres of activity." It was a very lucid comprehensive work and critics of the time acclaimed it to be superior to R. K. Mookerji's "Local Self-government in Ancient India." When RCM joined the

18 R. C. Majumdar in *BEFEO*, XXXII (1932), pp. 127–139.

19 R. C. Majumdar in *Inscriptions of Kambuja*, p. xv. He promised to discuss the matter "elaborately" on a subsequent occasion, but apparently he found no time to revert to the subject.



University of Dacca, P. Hartog, the Vice-Chancellor of the University, requested some departmental heads to publish some guide-line books in their respective fields of work, as he wanted to develop the university as a centre for advanced research work. RCM complied with the request by publishing his "Early History of Bengal;" it ultimately led to a major, co-operative effort, which resulted in the publication of the *History of Bengal*, Vol. I (1943), Ancient Period, edited by RCM himself, while the second volume, comprising the political history of medieval Bengal was edited by Sir Jadu Nath Sarkar and published in 1948. On a bigger canvas, RCM projected his "Outline of Ancient Indian History and Civilisation," published in 1927; it has run into six editions till 1971.

I sometimes wondered what led RCM to study the history of the spread of Indian civilization in foreign countries. In his *Reminiscences*,<sup>20</sup> he has furnished the answer. He has stated therein that instead of traversing the hackneyed path of Indian history and culture, it would be much more desirable to chalk out a new avenue for historical research by writing on the history and culture of the Indianized states of South-East Asia.<sup>20a</sup> As important research works in this field were mainly written in Dutch and French, the chief value of his work was that he brought the subject-matter of the spread of Indian culture in South-East Asia to the desk of the scholars unacquainted with Dutch or French. He has written many chapters on this subject in the Bharatiya Vidyabhavan Series (BVS), but some parts of these studies have been rather unsatisfactory.<sup>21</sup> It would have been excellent if RCM had also discussed the method and mechanism for the acclimatization of Indian culture in South-East Asia. It is not generally known that the Hinduism of South-East Asia is not exactly a replica of the type found in India, but a sort of Indianesque Hinduism. This will be clearly evident if a

<sup>20</sup> R. C. Majumdar, *JS.*, p. 63.

<sup>20a</sup> See my article "R. C. Majumdar and Regional History: A Survey of his work on South-East Asia" in *Journal of Indian History*, Vol. LVIII, pp. 253-287.

<sup>21</sup> For example in Vol. II ("The Age of Imperial Unity"), but the bibliography in later editions does not contain names of valuable works published by such authors as Wheatley, Wolters, Gungwu, for instance. The chronology of several Indian texts making reference to South-East Asia probably now requires revision. Vide H.B. Sarkar, 'A Geographical introduction to South-East Asia: The Indian Perspective' in *Bijdr. Kon. Inst.*, 137 (1981), pp. 293-323. Similarly, in vol. IV ('The age of Imperial Kanauj'), chap. xiv and vol. V, chap. xxi, RCM has altogether omitted from his purview the history and culture of Malaya. Both these volumes have ignored not only the revolutionary changes in the East-West trade-route, but also trade contacts between India and South-East Asian countries.



comparison of the *mantras* of India, which did not undergo any change since the days of the *gṛhyasūtras*, he made with those of Bali, for instance. In the earlier volumes of the series, RCM has allowed the story of the development of art and architecture for several centuries to be treated in one place for facility of understanding the subject better. Similar handling of the story of the rise, growth and decline of ports on the western and eastern coasts of India and effect of the monsoons on the East-West trade would have been welcome. A pertinent topic was the revolutionary change of the East-West trade route in c. 800 A. D., when Tāmralipti and Kāveripaṭṭinam lost their earlier pre-eminence and some other ports surprisingly came to the fore, connecting the Abbasid empire in the west, the Chinese empire in the Far East and the Śrīvijayan empire thrown in between.<sup>22</sup> It can however be easily admitted that a series of works of such stupendous magnitude can not be perfect in all respects, but these are not certainly "of a rather more popular character," as K. A. Nilakanta Sastri once dubbed them to be, though I think that none of these volumes have attained the stature and quality of the "Comprehensive History of India", Vol. II, edited by Professor Sastri himself. The well-known scholars who have contributed to the success of the first five volumes of the BVB have greatly succeeded in giving a more or less all round account of the achievements of the Indians in various spheres of life in and outside India. About the contributions of the Indians to the sum total of human civilization, Professor Macdonell had once stated, "The Indians are the only division of the Indo-European family which has created a great national religion . . . Brahmanism . . . and a great world religion . . . Buddhism; while all the rest far from displaying originality in this sphere have long since adopted a foreign faith." I would have also liked to add Indian Philosophy to the cultural assets of mankind. In an age when deliberate attempt is being made by interested people to belittle the contribution of India to the civilization of South-East Asia, it is refreshing to read an appreciation from S. Lévi, quoted by another great scholar.<sup>23</sup> "Mother of wisdom," writes S. Lévi, "India gave her mythology to her neighbours who went to teach it to the whole world. Mother of law and philosophy, she gave to three-quarters of Asia a god,

22 The evidence of Chia Tan (A.D. 785-805), the fragments of whose works in the form of a series of itineraries are preserved in quotations in the histories of the T'ang period, as well as accounts of travellers preserved in the Perso-Arabic texts from at least A. D. 851 onwards, fairly establish this point.

23 Quoted by G. Coedès in *The Indianized States of South-East Asia*, Intro., p. xvi.



a religion, a doctrine, an art. She carried her sacred language, her literature, her institutions into Indonesia, to the limits of the known world, and from there they spread back to Madagascar and perhaps to the coast of Africa, where the present flow of Indian immigrants seems to follow the faint traces of the past."

Vols. VI and VII deal with medieval part of Indian history dominated by the muslim rulers. "The advent of Islam", says RCM, <sup>24</sup> "constituted the first great rift in the solidarity of the Indian community since the incorporation of the aboriginal people into the Aryan society," but the contemporary Hindu society began to frown upon those who had once strayed out of the Hindu Society through forcible conversion, choice or accident and gradually the doors for re-admission were closed for ever. The two communities have lived together for over 700 years, but they generally lived in socio-religious exclusiveness, except in peripheral matters like food, dress, regalia, ornaments etc. <sup>25</sup> RCM has therefore tried to trace the genesis and growth of the idea of Pakistan from this outlook on life. A strange feature of the Hindu-Muslim relationship in the middle ages is that it has almost wholly to be gleaned from muslim chroniclers of events, the Hindu source-materials being generally meagre or mute. The view of muslim historians or authors are on the other hand conditioned by religious prescriptions and bias. Hodivala's studies on the source-materials on Indo-Muslim History (Bombay, 1939) are still an indispensable commentary on such materials as have been gathered by Elliot-Dowson in their monumental collectanea called "History of India as told by its own Historians." Regarding the Hindu-Muslim relationship of medieval days, some historians have virtually drawn a veil over the whole sordid affair. Neither the Hindus nor the Muslims of the present day can be responsible for the follies of their forefathers: the job of the historian is to present the facts as they are for corrective measures, as governments may deem fit. In this context, I may invite attention to a remark of Winston Churchill, who had appropriately written, "Pondering over the past may give guidance in the days to come, enabling a new generation to repair some of the damage of past years, and thus govern in accordance with the needs and glory of man." A comparative study of "A Comprehensive History of India", Vol. V, published under the authority of the Indian History Congress, and the corresponding volume of the BVB will indicate what I mean. The works of this genre are not meant for juvenile readers,

<sup>24</sup> *History and Culture of the Indian People*, V, p. 498.

<sup>25</sup> M. W. Mirza in the work cited under note 24 above, Vol. VI, p. 608.



but for advanced discerning research workers; so there was no point in hiding anything. Drawing a veil or anything very near to it, serves neither the cause of history nor of the country.

I am not however inclined to support the stringent views of RCM that the Islamic rulers of India rigidly implemented the Muslim canon laws.<sup>26</sup> In view of what has been stated above, it is necessary to understand the legal position of the Muslims and non-muslims before the canon laws. In the scheme of things, the Qur'ān is an over-riding authority, next comes the Hadis or traditions of the Prophet, followed in importance by the Shar' or the authentic traditions. The Ijma' or consensus of opinion is also a factor which the judges could not override. In cases where all these sources were silent, one is authorised to enforce one's own *rai*, which we may call in modern legal jargon "equity and good conscience." Just as the *Jātakas* created case-laws in the Buddhist countries of South-East Asia, Muslim judges and lawyers developed case-laws in Islamic countries in tune with Muslim canon laws. Orthodox Islam (Sunnism) developed four main schools of law, namely, Hanbalī, Maiki, Shāfi'i and Hanafī. Though the aim of all schools of Islam was to convert a Dar-ul-Harb (Infidel land) into Dar-ul-Islam (Muslim lands), the Muslim rulers of India followed the Hanafī school.

So far as I have been able to understand, RCM did not pay adequate attention to certain objective conditions in India which allowed its Muslim rulers considerable latitude in matters relating to state and administration. RCM formed the opinion that Islamic rulers were, by and large, strict observers of the canon laws described above. I think, on the other hand, that they governed the country in self-interest, and the silence of the canon law in specific matters allowed them to rule as they liked. It may be observed in this connection that Islam does not recognise monarchy or the class of *mullahs* or priesthood. Consequently some of the Muslim rulers of India, who were strong enough to repudiate the authority of the *ulamas* took a freehand in matters where the Qur'ān is silent. Such aberrations are abundant in Indian history.

One of the basic elements in the theory of Kingship of Balban was its divine character,<sup>27</sup> apparently influenced by Indian theories of

<sup>26</sup> Vide 'Sources of Indian Tradition', published by the Columbia University Press, 1958, pp.489-90 and R.C.Majumdar, *History of Medieval Bengal*, pp.246-254.

<sup>27</sup> Ziya-ud-din Barani tells us: "Kingship is the vice-regency of God on earth (*niyabat-i khudai*) and in its dignity only next to the prophethood. The king is the shadow of God (*zilullah*) and his heart is the repository of divine guidance and



kingship. According to Nizami,<sup>28</sup> when his personal and dynastic interests were involved, he had little respect for either justice, fair play or even shari'at. In a similar way, Iltutmish set at naught the exhortations of the ulamas and nominated Raziya as his successor. The throne of the dynasty was really a Turkish throne, maintained by an All-India Muslim-cum-Administrative service entirely manned by Turkish slave-officers and Tajiks; no Indian-born Muslim occupied any government service.<sup>29</sup> Ala-ud-Din was convinced that government and administration were quite independent of the rulers and the prescriptions of the shari'at. In fact, he never hesitated for a moment in killing 20-30 thousand new mussalmans, although religious prescriptions were not quite helpful for such a step. The position of the Hindus under such an Islamic state was either Islam or sword or to be a zimmi, i. e., a protected person. A liberal tinge was given to the status of the zimmi as early as the time of the Arab invasion of Sindh, al-Hajjaj, the governor of Iraq, after first ordering Muhammed bin Qasim to decapitate the heads of non-believers, wrote in a later epistle, "Because after they have become zimmi we have no right whatever to interfere with their lives and their property. Do therefore permit them to build the temples of those they worship. No one is prohibited from following his own religion, and let no one prevent them from doing so, so that they may live happy in their own homes." Since according a zimmi status depended in a large measure on the will of the ruler concerned, cases of such persons could vary from reign to reign.<sup>30</sup> Such flexibility on the part of the rulers of both South and South-East Asia belonged to the domain of *rāja-dharma*.

radiance. In the discharge of his kingly responsibilities, he is at all times inspired by God." Quoted by K.A. Nizami in *Compr. Hist. Ind.*, V.p. 281. In a similar vein, Muhammad bin Tughluq had, in the token currency issued by him, inscribed the following: "He who obeys the sultan obeys God" and again "Obey God, obey the prophet and those in authority amongst you. "Mughal emperors also thought in a similar way, but the bulk of the Muslims did not recognise that theocracy must have an independent religious head.

28 K. A. Nizami in *l. c.*, p. 284.

29 *Vide* in this connection M. Habib and (Mrs.) Dr. Afsar Khan, *The Political Theory of the Delhi Sultanate*, particularly the Appendix.

30 The zimmi living in the dominions of the Muslim rulers had to submit to twenty conditions imposed by them. No. 1 of the conditions was the prohibition of new temples; no. 2 prohibited repair of old buildings destroyed and no. 17 did not permit the construction of Hindu houses near Muslim ones. If any one of the twenty conditions was violated, "it shall be lawful for Muslims to take their lives and possessions as though they were the lives and possession of unbelievers in a



Hindu-Muslim relations in the following Mughal period did not always proceed on even tempo. The conception of the zimmi and the jizya provided theoretical relief to the Hindus, but the jizya was understood differently by different ulamas and others. According to the shari'at books, the jizya meant a personal tax on a non-muslim to remain a non-muslim, but according to Barani, Amir Khusrau, Shaikh Nizam-ud-Din Aulia, for instance, "the term jizya is used to mean any tax which is not a land-tax." Some scholars have asserted<sup>31</sup> that jizya in the sense of the medieval shari'at has not been levied in India, except by Aurangzeb.

In any case, the scenario changes for the better in the reign of Sher Shah, whom even an orthodox historian like Badauni called "just", and in the time of Akbar, both of whom followed the principle of sulh-i-kul, i.e., universal toleration. In the reign of Jahangir, the son of a Hindu princess, the religious persecution of the Sultanate was revived, but not on the same scale, though it grew in intensity during Shah Jahan's reign (*vide* B. P. Saksena, *History of Shah Jahan*, pp. 293-95). Gradually the Mughal dynasty was also Indianized. Kandahar conquered by Akbar was finally lost during the reign of Shah Jahan (1653) and vigorous attempts to conquer Balkh and Badakshan in central Asia ended in a fiasco. Thus, in the reign of Shah Jahan, the Mughal dynasty already bereft of the patrimony of Farganah and loss of Kandahar became fully a dynasty of Indianized rulers. The Kuṣāṇa kings accepted an Indian religion in the second generation and an Indian name in the seventh generation, but the Turco-Afghan and the succeeding rulers up to the end of the Mughal dynasty (1857) were all out of bounds in these two respects. Some notable foreign scholars (Edwardes and Garrett) have observed that to the vast majority of the Indians, Mughal empire was essentially a foreign empire, which did not evoke spontaneous support, could not derive sustenance from the well of ancient tradition, while its administrative apparatus was alien in character and ensured no organic development. It cannot be denied that there is at least some amount

state of war with the faithful." For details *vide*: *Sources of Indian Tradition*, Columbia University Press, 1958, pp. 489-90. As I have said earlier, the Muslim rulers of India generally followed dynastic interests as well as the *rājadharma*, if they were strong enough, using wide discretion, unless they were staunch conservatives like Firuz Shah Tughluq or Aurangzeb.

<sup>31</sup> *Vide* B.P. Saksena in *Comper. Hist. Ind.*, V, p. 578. Attitudes of the Mughal emperors towards the Hindus have been discussed in *Hist. Culture Ind. People*, VI, pp. 6, 17-22; *Ibid.*, VII, pp. 234, 305-6 and Chap. XVIII.



of truth in it. Irfan Habib has postulated the view in his *Agrarian System in Mughal India* that economic tyranny rather than religious reaction was the major cause for opposition to Aurangzeb. RCM seems to have believed that the latter was the real cause, while the former was a substantial contributory factor.

If we compare the relevant informations bearing on the character of the Indians, as given in the fragments of Magasthene and in the accounts of Al-Bīrūnī's India, we shall find a scenario of gradual degeneration of the people, though this becomes more marked on the eve of the Muslim invasion of India. British conquest of India also saw similar conditions obtaining in India. The dead traditions of the past, fossilized customs, irrational bigotry which sanctified untouchability among the Hindus, prevalence of *sutee* rites, polygamy, taboo on sea-voyage made Hindu life a stagnant pool. Economic tyranny of Hindu and Muslim feudal lords oppressed the general peasantry alike. Saumyendra Nath Tagore has well stated, "The west heralded by Britain had come to India as an instrument of history destined to shake India out of her stupor and to release a new tide of thought and activity in the old river-bed of history."<sup>32</sup> I have earlier invited attention of the readers to the view of RCM that the Bengalee ethos had registered an unimaginable downfall facilitating gradual extension of British power in India. As Bengal was the first to receive the benefits of western education, the synthesis of the two cultures ushered a sort of renaissance in many spheres of its life. Western education also brought in its train western democratic nuances in Indian public life. The Muslims were as yet unreconciled to western culture and political thrust. While the cultural and political situation was thus in a sort of flux, when the old was not yet dead and the new has not yet fully emerged, there occurred the Great Revolt of 1857. Regarding this Revolt, RCM after weighing the available evidence of the sepoys and their so-called leaders came to the tentative conclusion "that the miseries and blood-shed of 1857-58 were not the birth pangs of the freedom movement in India, but the dying process of an obsolete aristocracy and centrifugal feudalism of the medieval age."

The History of the freedom Movement in India provoked a spate of works of diverse qualities. Noteworthy among these are Tara Chand's 'History of the Freedom Movement in India', Vol. I (Pub. Div., 1961),

<sup>32</sup> Vide his *Raja Ram Mohan Ray*, 1966, pp. 7-8.



Vol. II (1967), RCM's 'History of the Freedom Movement' in India, Vols. I – III, S. N. Sen's '1857' (Delhi, 1957), etc. Tara Chand's work was subjected to harsh criticism by RCM, but impartial observers must have noticed that the quality of work was fairly high, but the planning and execution of the project could have been much better, if it was reduced in bulk and matters not much relevant were eliminated. More judicious was S.N. Sen's '1857'. There are also other works of good quality, which form the background story of the Freedom Movement in India. One is S. B. Chaudhury's 'Civil Disturbances During British Rule' and another small but excellent work entitled 'Freedom Struggle' by Bipan Chandra, Amales Tripathi and Barun De. These works supplement or amplify the work of RCM in several respects.

Irfan Habib has described the economic tyranny of the Mughal administration. Under European colonial administration in South and South-East Asia as well as in several parts of the Far East, the peasantry was bled white and the cottage industry was destroyed. The Muslims were the worst sufferers. Tara Chand quotes from Sir Alfred Lyall,<sup>33</sup> "The English turned fiercely on the Mahomedans as upon their real enemies and most dangerous rivals; so that the failure of the revolt was much more disastrous to them than to the Hindus." But time heals many things. The Sepoy Mutiny had brought the Hindus and the Muslims together in many parts of India, as far a short while in the days of Khilafat Movement of 1920. In the political renaissance of the Muslims of India, Sir Syed Anmad Khan, who was born in an aristocratic family and served as the prime minister of emperor Akbar Shah II (1806–37), explained religion and nationalism in a way which would have perhaps procured his death in the reign of Firoz Tughluq or Aurangzeb. He said, "No one believed in God could be condemned as infidel (*kafir*) or a heretic (*mulhid*)."<sup>34</sup> No Hindu could have pleaded better than him when he said at Patna on January 27, 1833, "Now both of us live on the air of India, drink the holy waters of the Gaṅgā and Yamunā. We both feed upon the products of the Indian soil. We are together in life and death: living in India both of us have changed our blood, the colour of our blood has become

<sup>33</sup> Quoted in his *History of Freedom Movement in India*, II, p. 349 and Lyall, *Asiatic Studies, Religious and Social*, 2nd ed. 1884, pp. 239–40.

<sup>34</sup> Quoted by Tara Chand, *I.c.*, II, p. 356. Ferishta (quoted in *Compr. Hist. Ind.* V, p. 754, footnote 36) has stated that apostacy (*irtidad*) or acceptance of another creed by a Mussalman was, according to the principles accepted in medieval Shari' at, a crime punishable by death.



the same, our features have become similar; the mussalmans have adopted numerous Hindu customs; the Hindus have accepted many Muslim traits of conduct; we became so fused that we developed the new language of Urdu, which was neither our language nor that of the Hindus. Therefore, if we except that part of our lives which belong to God, then undoubtedly, in consideration of the fact that we belong to the same country, we are a nation, and the progress and welfare of the country, and of both of us, depend on our unity, mutual sympathy, and love, while our mutual disagreement, obstinacy and opposition and ill feeling are sure to destroy us."<sup>35</sup>

Unfortunately, the excellent ideas propagated by him and translated by him into action by the foundation of some academic institutions with high ideals gradually lost their appeal even to him on account of divergent strains in national and international politics and British assistance in the promotion of a policy of 'Divide and Rule.' The two great communities thus began to suspect each other. The foundation of the Indian National Congress in 1885 engineered different reactions among the people. While Sir Auckland Colvin was pointing out to Hume the dangerous possibilities of the Congress politics, the Muslims feared that in simple elections to representative bodies sponsored by government, the Muslims will have very little chance. Thus was ushered in the communal politics, to subserve which the British promoted the scheme of the partition of Bengal, but massive pressure of public opinion of unrelenting vitality which surprised the rulers, unsettled the settled fact and the scheme was withdrawn. After a joint forage during the Khilafat movement and non-cooperation movement (1920 & 1921), the two communities gradually drifted apart for the next twenty years. RCM and many other scholars have described the complex situation in meticulous details.

A stupendous phenomenon in Indian history is the emergence of Gandhiji — a saint, social reformer and politician rolled into one. If he was born in the fifth or sixth century B. C., scholars would have had to scartch their brain, in order to establish the fact that he was

<sup>35</sup> Quoted by Tara Chand, *l.c.*, pp. 357-58.



really a man of flesh and blood, as in the case of Buddha.<sup>36</sup> He created the mass base for the national movement, which only a saint-like person like him could do, taught them fearlessness even in the face of bullets while pursuing the path of non-violence, led through the non-cooperation movement (1921), the Civil Disobedience Movement (1930-33) and finally launched the 'Quit India' movement in 1942. If Hitler had not started the second World War, it is doubtful if the national movement for freedom in India could have gained its goal so soon. The 'Quit India' movement was repressed with brutality, but stubborn refusal to quit would have needed a military reconquest of India, — a possibility which no political party, far less the Labour Government under Clement Attlee which came to power when victory was assured to the allies, was prepared to undertake. Attlee, who, on being queried, discussed with P. B. Chakravarti, Chief Justice of West Bengal, then officiating as governor of the state, the reason for the withdrawal of British power from India, stated that British withdrawal was mainly due to strong doubts about the allegiance of the Indian army to the British authorities.<sup>37</sup> This was underlined by the activities of Subhas Chandra Bose and the INA, dramatically publicized by putting the INA officers and men to trial.<sup>38</sup> A new massive Congress agitation for national freedom could have led to an unimaginable holocaust, which could only be paralleled by religious wars of the late middle ages in Europe.

RCM has devoted adequate attention to these topics in Vol. XI of the BVS and in his 'History of the Freedom Movement'. In this great drama, the fate of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose has remained till now an unresolved riddle. Many persons do not believe that Bose died after his departure from Bangkok (via Saigon) in a plane crash at Taihoku

<sup>36</sup> The greatest exponent of the theory that Buddha was not a man of flesh and blood was E. Senart in his *Essai sur la légende du Buddha*, published from Paris, in 1876. In it, Senart has stated that a Buddha might have lived somewhere at some period, but the Buddha of the Buddhist traditions has never lived and that the stories of his birth, his mental struggles and death are not those of a man. Senart interpreted the entire life story of Buddha as a solar myth and dismissed it as unreal (*Vide* E. Senart, *l.c.*, resume. particularly pp. 504 ff.). This view was ably rebutted by H. Oldenburg and is now universally admitted.

<sup>37</sup> The documentary evidence in this regard has been published by RCM in his JS, p. 230.

<sup>38</sup> The account of the INA has been discussed in RCM, *Hist. Culture Ind. People*, XI, chap. XXIX, pp. 682-94 and Appendix II in *Ibid.* This has been more elaborately discussed in his *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, III, pp. 715-736.



airport in Formosa on 18 August, 1945. RCM has adduced two main reasons for the belief that Bose did not die in the so-called air-crash.<sup>39</sup> He has stated that two Americans saw Bose at Saigon even two days after the so-called plane crash. Secondly, Lord Wavell, Governor General of India, wrote to Pethick Lawrence on 23 August 1945 i. e., five days after the so-called plane crash, about where to keep Subhas Chandra Bose.<sup>40</sup> These two foreign sources have been supplemented by Satya Narain Sinha, who held a responsible position under the government of India. He visited the site of the so-called plane crash at Taihoku and "met at least one official who was there on 18 August, 1945, the day of the accident. Sinha was convinced by his testimony as well as the records that no plane accident occurred there on that date." He pursued his enquiry with admirable energy and the results have been summarised by RCM thus (Vol. XI, l. c., p. 692):

"Netaji's plane halted at Taipei for refuelling and took off for Dairen (in Manchuria) at 14.30 hours on 18 August. He arrived safely at Dairen and stayed there in disguise even after it was occupied by the Russians. He was looked upon as a friend and partisan of the German Nazis and was transported to Siberia. No further information could be gathered by Sinha." RCM's life's task ended with the completion of the BVS: a fitting epitaph to his memorable life and versatile genius.

*Assessment of the Contribution as an Historian:*

As I have stated earlier, the position of RCM among the historians of India is unique. No other scholar from India and very few from abroad have been able to cover such a huge mass of territory within the framework of their historical writings with so much competence. The first generation of Indian scholars trained in the western methods of scholarship included the names of such historians as R. C. Dutt ('A History of Civilisation in Ancient India', 1889) and R. G. Bhandarkar ('Early History of the Deccan', 1895). RCM belonged to the second generation of such scholars. Their task was much more onerous than those of the present time, as the former had to lay the matrix of their respective works on sound theoretical lines, take note of the valid part of the works of the earlier scholars, marshal new evidence in proper

<sup>39</sup> RCM, JS, p. 134.

<sup>40</sup> Vide: *The Transfer of Power*, Vol. VI, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1976, p. 107 and RCM, JS, p. 134.



sequence and perspective and then try to push forward towards the unknown by bridging the gaps in our knowledge, thus adding a new realm to the world of scholarship. Every generation adds to the sum total of our historical knowledge. One could easily say with Bernard of Chartres: "We are no more than dwarfs; but, perched on the shoulders of our masters, we cannot fail to see further than they." RCM has extended our knowledge in almost every department of historical studies he has devoted his attention to. He was not indeed fortunate like G. Coedès to resuscitate the History of an empire out of the limbo of the past ('Le royaume de Śrīvijaya' in *BEFEO* XVIII, no. 6, 1918), but he has not written anything without adding to our knowledge or reinterpreting older data in a new context. Scholars like Jadu Nath Sarkar and G. S. Sardesai have undertaken massive micro studies of Indian history limited to space and time, the former, for instance, in the study of the history of Aurangzeb and the later Mughals particularly, while the latter in that of the Mahrattas, but the works of these two great scholars, indispensable in their respective fields of work have never reached the dimension of the works of RCM.

The present writer is perhaps the oldest living pupil of RCM. I attended his M. A. classes during the sessions 1927-29 in the University of Dacca and later on worked under him with a University research scholarship. From the time I left the University to the time of his death in February, 1980, I had further numerous occasions to know him intimately as a man and scholar. It was also a rare fortune for me that I read at the University under two of the greatest scholars of the present century namely, H. C. Raychaudhuri (Author of 'Political History of Ancient India', etc.) and RCM: the former deputised for RCM when he went to foreign countries on a study-tour. As a teacher, RCM was superb. When A. F. Rahman, a former colleague of RCM in the Department of History of the Dacca University, became the first Indian Vice-chancellor of the University, he stated in a reception in the Department of History that the Department was safe under a hard task-master like RCM. As a research scholar working under him, I found that this remark was fully applicable to scholars working under him too. As it is impossible to carry on researches on South-East Asia, without learning Dutch and French,<sup>41</sup> I had to acquire a good working knowledge in these languages; without his prodding, I would not have probably learnt the classical languages of Indonesia without the help of

41 RCM learnt these languages by self-effort. *Vide* his *JS*, p. 64.



any guide whatsoever. RCM was very affectionate to his pupils and promising scholars, and unknown to them he has sometimes tried to improve the prospects in their life. It is not however generally known that RCM as well as (Sir) J. C. Ghosh have sometimes helped the revolutionaries, who pursued their studies at the university and stayed at university hostels, out of their predicaments when police search parties came, and occasionally helped them financially.<sup>42</sup> RCM has stated in his *Reminiscences*<sup>43</sup> that he was very happy in offering financial assistance to Subhas Chandra Bose before he started on his final fateful journey from Calcutta for foreign countries. The present writer has been too close to RCM perhaps to form any dispassionate opinion regarding his place among the historians of India, but as an humble historian I have tried to follow the path of truth to the best of my ability in forming an opinion regarding men and things, and I have no hesitation in stating that I consider him to be the greatest historian produced by India after the British conquest of this country.

42 *Vide* his *JS*, pp. 131-133.







**K. A. Nilakanta Sastri**  
**(1892–1975)**

BY  
G. SUBBIAH

**I**

The year was 1924 and the place was Chidambaram, the famous abode of Naṭarāja, the eternal Dancer. Rev. Henry Heras S. J., Professor of Indian History, St. Xavier's College, Bombay had been invited to address the students of the Sri Meenakshi College (which later grew into the Annamalai University) at Chidambaram by Professor K. A. N. Sastri who was then its Principal. Recalling his first meeting with Father Heras after 37 years, Professor K. A. N. Sastri has recorded a remarkable part of the conversation that had taken place between them:

“Even at my first meeting with him, Father Heras showed me some of the draft chapters of the Aravidu Dynasty; I was greatly surprised and told him: ‘Here I am, an Indian and professional teacher of history, with a fair equipment in history and the Indian languages, who has taught the subject for nearly a dozen years but without a single line of historical writing to my credit; and you, a Spaniard with no prior knowledge of Indian History or languages, have taken less than two years not only to become a good teacher of India’s history and culture, but an excellent worker in the field of original historical research. How do you manage this?’ His reply, which I still recall vividly, gave in a nutshell his entire attitude to life and work. ‘Look here Sastri,’ he said, ‘I am a Jesuit bound by vows to obedience, poverty and service to God. I have no domestic cares or economic ambitions.

My grateful acknowledgements are due to Dr. Tarasankar Banerjee, Reader, Department of History, Visva-Bharati, for his valuable suggestions in the preparation of this article.



I have now been ordered by my superiors to go and teach Indian History in Xavier's College, Bombay, and that is the method prescribed for me in which to serve God. Unless I devote all my time and energy to this work, I shall not be fulfilling my duty. If you found yourself in a similar situation, he added encouragingly, 'you will do much better.'<sup>1</sup>

Prophetic utterance it was indeed! For thereafter, Professor K. A. N. Sastri not only did much better but also rose to become one of the rarest breed of Indian historians who could write both on south as well as north Indian history with equal clarity, confidence and conviction.

## II

Kallidaikurichi Aiyah Aiyar Nilakantan who was cryptically known in the academic circles of Indian historians as 'Professor Sastri' was born on 12th August 1892 into a Telugu-Niyogi Brahmin family which, migrating from Andhra, had settled down generations back at Kallidaikuruchi, a tiny town on the banks of Tambraparni river in Tirunelveli district, Tamilnadu State.<sup>2</sup>

Professor Sastri had his early education at Kallidaikuruchi (where his father was running a school) and Ambasamudram (a nearby town) and later joined the Hindu College, Tirunelveli to do his F. A. (Intermediate) where among his class fellows were Professor S. Vaiyapuri Pillai and Sri P. N. Appaswami. After Sastri passed his F. A., in First class, his elder brother encouraged him to continue his studies at Madras. Accordingly Sastri joined the Madras Christian College for his B. A. degree with Sanskrit, History and English as his main subjects. After graduation, Sastri continued M. A. (History) in the same college and passed in the First class with First rank in the Presidency.

<sup>1</sup> K.A.N. Sastri, *Sources of Indian History*, (hereafter *SIH*), pp. 1-2.

<sup>2</sup> The materials for this section have been largely collected from the *Professor K.A. Neelakanta Sastri Felicitation Volume*, 1971, pp. i-vi.



Sastri's professional career began in the year 1913 when he obtained his M. A. degree and joined as Lecturer in History in the Hindu College, Tirunelveli. Declining an attractive offer by the authorities of the Madras Christian College, Sastri chose to join the Hindu College on half the salary "as he and his friends had evolved a scheme by which the Hindu College was to be made a replica of Fergusson College, Poona where selfless teachers would turn out generations of students imbued with ideas of patriotism and sacrifice." But the laudable scheme fell through owing to several oppositions and Sastri left the college in the year 1918 and remained unemployed for a whole year. In the year 1919, through the goodwill of Sir P. S. Sivasami Aiyar and Rt-Hon'ble V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, Sastri joined the Banaras Hindu University as Professor of History. He left BHU in 1920 when Sri S.R.M.M. Annamalai Chettiar (later Rājah Sir Annamalai Chettiar of Chettināḍu) offered him the post of Principal of the Sree Meenakshi College at Chidambaram. Professor Sastri served the college for more than seven years but in 1928, he relinquished the post owing to the difference of opinion between him and the management. In 1929, Sastri joined the National College, Tiruchirappalli as Professor of History with the help of his friend Professor V. Saranathan who was then the Principal of the College. Towards the end of 1929, Professor Sastri was appointed to the Chair of Professor of Indian History and Archaeology to succeed Rao Bahadur S. Krishnasami Aiyangar in the University of Madras. Professor Sastri held that position with great distinction till his retirement in the year 1947. In 1952, he was offered the Chair of Professor of Indology, founded by the Maharājā of Mysore, His Highness Sri Jayachāmarāja Wadiyar Bahadur in the University of Mysore. In 1956 he returned to Madras and the very next year became the Director of the Institute of Traditional Cultures of South East Asia set up by the UNESCO in collaboration with the University of Madras. He held the post till 1971 when he retired from active academic pursuits on account of his failing health and eyesight. An important era in south Indian historiography came to a close when Sastri breathed his last in June, 1975.

Sastri won several academic honours in the course of his long career. In 1946, he was elected as the General President of the Indian History Congress at its Patna Session and in 1951 he became the General President of the All India Oriental Conference at its Lucknow Session. In 1952, the Tribhuvan University, Nepal invited him to deliver special lectures on Indian Culture and later he went to Malaya to organise the department of Indian Studies in the University of



Malaya. In the year 1959, at the invitation of American Historical Association and the University of Chicago, Sastri served as Visiting Professor at Chicago University for two quarters. Sastri was an Hon. member of Ecole Francaise d'Extreme Orient, Saigon; Royal Asiatic Society, Bombay, Ceylon Malayan branches; Hon. Fellow of the Royal of Great Britain and Ireland; and member, Central Advisory Board of Archaeology, New Delhi.

### III

Professor Sastri stormed into the academic world of South Indian history with the publication of his book *The Pandyan Kingdom* (London, 1929; Reprint Madras, 1972) which was an amplified version of the lectures delivered by him at the University of Madras in the year 1926. The book created a stir and marked the beginning of an important phase in south Indian historiography.

Sastri who began publishing his writings relatively at the late age of 37 years brought out altogether twenty-five books and about one hundred and fifty articles on various aspects of Indian history and culture.<sup>3</sup> More than sixty important articles written by Sastri have been brought together and published in two separate volumes viz., *Aspects of India's History and Culture*, 1974 (36 articles) and *South India and South-East Asia*, 1978 (28 articles). He also edited two multi-author volumes on ancient India viz., (i) *Age of the Nandas and Mauryas* (1952, 1967) and (ii) *A Comprehensive History of India*, Vol. II, *The Mauryas and Satavahanas* (1957); and supervised the publication of the bi-annual *Bulletin of the Traditional Cultures* (1957-71).

It is not possible here to undertake a detailed analysis of all the writings of Sastri: nor the present venture is intended to be one. Our task is more specific and perhaps more difficult one of exploring "the

<sup>3</sup> For a comprehensive list of books and articles by Sastri till 1971, see the above volume, pp. viii-xxiv. The books which are left out in the list are (i) *Cultural Contacts Between Aryans & Dravidians* (hereafter CCBAD), 1967; (ii) *The Sangam Literature its Cults and Cultures* (hereafter SLCC), 1972; (iii) *Cultural Expansion of India*, 1959; (iv), K. A. N. Sastri and G. Srinivasachari, *Life and Culture of the Indian People* (hereafter LCIP) 2nd edition, 1974.



underlying, often concealed or unconsciously held assumptions" which determined the character of Sastri's writings a whole. In other words we should be attempting to examine why Sastri viewed Indian history — particularly south Indian history — the way he viewed. Hence what is presented below is only a panoramic review of Sastri's important works which, it is hoped, would serve as a prelude to the discussion that follows.

Despite the fact that Sastri wrote several books and articles in peninsular or sub-continental perspective, he was essentially a great historian of the history and culture of the far south. It is interesting to note that Sastri published almost all his books on north Indian history or on the general history of India only after 1947, the year of his retirement from the University of Madras. His books which encompassed the entire range of Indian History are (i) *History of India*, 3 vols. (1950-53) (ii) *An Advanced History of India* (1970) and (iii) *Life and Culture of the Indian People* (1966, 1974).<sup>4</sup> Of them the last two books had G. Srinivasachari as co-author. Besides, he wrote several chapters in the *Age of the Nandas and Mauryas* and in *A Comprehensive History of India* Vol. II, both of which were edited by him. He also contributed lengthy chapters on the history of the Chālukyans of Bādāmi and Kalyāṇi in the *Early History of Deccan*, Vol. I and II edited by G. Yazdani. Sastri's account of the Mauryan history and polity, in the volumes edited by him, speaks eloquently of his mastery over early north Indian history and his writings on the Chālukyans of Bādāmi and Kalyāṇi are definite contributions to the political history of the mediaeval Deccan. The other books mostly contain very neatly presented summaries of different phases of Indian history and culture and as such serve the purpose of being good text-books.

Sastri's writings on the history and culture of the extreme south are however a class apart. Realizing that "the scientific study and interpretation of the sources of South Indian history has not advanced far beyond the elementary stages" and at the same time arresting the "temptation to forge ahead with sweeping conclusions drawn from stray facts without waiting for the chain of evidence to be completed" Sastri devoted the initial years of his research to work out as far as possible, a firm and defensible chronological framework of South Indian history.

<sup>4</sup> To these one may add the following books of Sastri. i) *Three Great Rulers* (Asoka, Akbar, Sivaji), N. D. and *Essentials of World History*, 1957. His *LCIP* contains several essays on themes related to pre and post independent India.



"The stress on political history", he argued therefore, "is not accidental or perverse and it does not proceed from a failure to realize the value or importance of social history. Any picture of social life, if it is to be of real significance, must have a firmly established framework of chronology to fit into. And this framework which alone could support and hold together the reconstructions of social and religious history, cannot be built up except by fixing the details of political history."<sup>5</sup> In consonance with his view Sastri devoted much attention to chronology and political history in all his major works. After his work on the Pāndyas, Sastri brought out a series of three volumes on the history of the Chōlas viz. (i) *Studies in Cōḷa History and Administration* (1933) (ii) *The Cōḷas*, 2 vols. (1935, 37). A revised edition of the *Cōḷas*, undoubtedly his *magnum opus*, was published in one volume in 1955. It was a grand effort to systematize the mass of details culled from thousands of Chōḷa records and to present a coherent picture of South Indian history during the four centuries of the Chōḷa rule. Sastri devotes one half of the book to the narration of the political chronology of the Chōḷas and in the other half deals with socio-economic and cultural aspects during the Chōḷa times. Despite the challenges thrown in recent years at some of Sastri's formulations — particularly on state and polity — the work still remains as the most impressive of the historical scholarship on early south India.

In 1939 appeared his *Foreign Notices of South India: From Megasthenes to Ma Huan*, a source book enriched with useful notes. Seven years later Sastri brought out *Further Sources of Vijayanagara History* in three volumes in collaboration with N. Venkitaramanayya, a noted authority on the Vijayanagara history. In between Sastri published a booklet, *Historical Method in Relation to Problems of South Indian History* (1941) of which a revised and enlarged edition with H. S. Ramanna as co-author was published in 1956.<sup>6</sup> Though primarily meant for the use of students, the booklet throws light on Sastri's ideas on history and historian's craft. Another booklet of him *Gleaning on Social Life from the Avadanas*<sup>7</sup> was published in 1945 by the Indian Research Institute, Calcutta.

Sastri's publishing career reached its high watermark during the

<sup>5</sup> K.A.N.Sastri, *Aspects of Indian's History and Culture* (hereafter *AIHC*), p. 9.

<sup>6</sup> The revised edition appeared with the title, *Historical Method in Relation to Problems of Indian History* (hereafter *HMRPIH*).

<sup>7</sup> This is included among the collection of his papers in *AIHC*, pp. 29-63.



decade that followed 1947, the year of his retirement from the University of Madras. Apart from the works we have already mentioned, Sastri brought out the following books (i) *The Tamil Kingdoms of South India* (1948) (ii) *Factors in Indian History* (1949) (iii) *Dravidian Literatures* (1949) (iv) *History of Sri Vijaya*<sup>8</sup> (1949) (v) *South Indian Influences in the Far East* (1949). Of them, the last two small but important books earned him a respectable place in the South-East Asian historiography. However the most significant work that Sastri produced during the period was *A History of South India* (1955) which presents a general survey of the history of south India from pre-historic times to the fall of Vijayanagar. The book has already gone into several editions and still remains unrivalled in quality. The political history occupies a lion's share of this 500 pages book too and socio-economic conditions, Literature, Religion and Philosophy and Art of South India over this long period have been only summarily treated in separate chapters. But Sastri defends his position stating that, "the kings and chieftains who so much attract our attention were often splendid promoters of culture and the arts besides being the upholders of society and the protectors of the people. Their history, if pursued on a proper scale and with a full knowledge of the sources, will often be seen to verge on that true history of the life of the people which the critics of dry-as-dust history pine for."<sup>9</sup>

Sastri's publications in the sixties include (i) *Development of Religion in South India* (1963) (ii) *The Culture and History of the Tamils* (1963) (iii) *Sources of Indian History with Special Reference to South India* (1964) and (iv) *Cultural Contacts Between Aryans and Dravidians* (1967). Each one is a slim volume containing a concise but scholarly discussion of the theme concerned. Sastri's last book appeared in 1972 when he was at the ripe age of 80 and the work entitled *Sangam Literature; its Cults and Cultures* marked a fitting finale to a long and illustrious career which had begun with *The Pandyan Kingdom*.

<sup>8</sup> Also see his paper on 'Sri Vijaya' in the *Bulletin de l'Ecole Francaise d'Extreme-Orient*, Vol. xl, pp. 239-313.

<sup>9</sup> *History of South India*, 3rd edition (hereafter *HSI*.) p. 13.



## IV

Sastri seeks to establish two historical conventions — one in the field of methodology and the other in conceptualization — through several of his writings on south Indian history. Methodologically, in marked difference to the long prevailing convention of treating the peninsular India as consisting of two historical as well as cultural units viz., (i) Deccan (ancient *Dakṣiṇāpatha*) and (ii) the Far South (ancient *Drāviḍadeśa*), Sastri defines South India in the widest sense of the term to refer to “all the land lying south of the Vindhya.”<sup>10</sup> Though he does not adduce any particular reason, it appears from his early writings that he does so mainly to dissolve any provincialism in Indian historical study: “for unduly to narrow the field of our investigation will be to lose our sense of proportion.”<sup>11</sup> Why then one should speak at all the South in Indian history? Sastri answers: “... the nature of evidence we have got to deal with in South Indian History has a distinct colour and character of its own, and raises problems which are peculiar to it. And that more than anything else is my reason for stating that it would be necessary to recognise a distinct branch of Indian Historical research specially in relation to South Indian problems.”<sup>12</sup>

This particular approach of Sastri to *South*, though laudable on its own merits, does not permit him to focus his attention adequately to the regional variations in Indian culture or to the distinctive features of the sub-regional variations in south India. Sastri was perhaps too apprehensive of the possibility that any projection of the regional peculiarities might feed the growth of regionalism and thereby run counter to the idea of oneness or commonness of what he often calls Hindu or Sanskrit culture throughout India.<sup>13</sup> As a consequence, even when he chose to write a book on *The Culture and History of the Tamils* (1963), he found it necessary to assure the reader in the Preface itself: “Care has

<sup>10</sup> *HSI.*, p. 1., also *SIH.*, p. 2.

<sup>11</sup> *HIMRPIH*, I edition, p. 1. How the provincial outlook dominated South Indian historiography is well discussed by S. Settar, in his presidential address (Ancient Period), ‘Twentieth Century in Ancient India’ delivered at the 43rd Session of the Indian History Congress, 1982, pp. 3-4.

<sup>12</sup> *HMRPIH.*, I edition, p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> cf. S. Settar, *op. cit.*, p. 7.



been taken not to present the story in any isolationist or chauvinist spirit."

This brings us to the conceptual aspect of Sastri's historical writings. Sastri's conceptual analysis of south Indian history revolves around Āryan-Dravidian syndrome with all its implications. So recurrent is the theme in his writings that even when the talk of 'Āryan' and 'Dravidian' India had fallen into much abuse, Sastri holds on to it and in his book entitled, *Cultural Contacts between Aryans and Dravidians* (1967), states: "... the subject is one of great academic interest, though a very complicated one, and an attempt at a proper comprehension of these relations is fundamental to a fruitful understanding of the story of Indian civilization."<sup>14</sup>

It should, however, be noted that in the Tamil speaking regions, owing to certain socio-political movements in the late 19th and early 20th century, the two terms, Āryan and Dravidian, irrespective of what the philologists, anthropologists and ethnologists meant by them, came to acquire new meaning and significance. As 'the present has an influence in the historian's work' and also as 'the knowledge of the past varies with the personality of the historian', the clue to Sastri's perspective of the problem as well as of south Indian culture perhaps lies in our understanding of the age in which Sastri lived and worked.

The latter half of the 19th century witnessed the birth of a Resurgence Movement in the Tamil region which aimed at injecting new life and vigour to literary Tamil which, in the course of the preceding centuries, had fallen under the stranglehold of pundits who had laden the language with high-flown Sanskrit vocabulary. Initiated by persons who were educated in western ideas, this movement was in essence a fresh search for identity and drew, in the initial stages, its support from different *elite* sections of the Tamil society. The publication of Bishop R. Caldwell's epoch-making work, *A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian Languages* (1856) and the recovery of Sangam Literary text by C. W. Damodaran Pillai and U. V. Saminatha Aiyar provided stimulus to the movement. Its aim was Tamil revivalism or recapturing of the

<sup>14</sup> CCBAD., p. 1. Four lectures which he delivered in 1964 in the department of History, Patna University constitute the book.



live contact with one's own roots and it is important to note that the movement had among its pioneers quite a few Tamil Brahmins too.<sup>15</sup>

But around the turn of this century, the Tamil Brahmins held a peculiar and enviable position in south Indian society. As a modern Indian historian puts it: "Being part of the social group which stood at the forefront of the national movement (especially as members of the Indian National Congress), as part of the loyal bureaucracy under the British as well as the Princely States (especially in Mysore and Travancore), and as part of the *elite*, educated in Western ideas, they shared the advantages which were beyond the reach of the rest of the social groups... the majority of them were keen on reiterating traditional values and defending the gains which both tradition and modernity had secured for them."<sup>16</sup> This led a group of non-Brahmin *elite* in Madras to form a federation in 1916 to promote 'the political interests of non-Brahmin caste Hindus'. A crucial turn occurred in the late 20's when the steadily growing non-Brahmin movement began identifying itself with the Tamil Resurgence movement for ideological support and opposed the National Congress on the ground that it was largely a Brahmin organisation.<sup>17</sup> This created at least initially an awkward situation for those Brahmin scholars who were supporters of Tamil Resurgence and for those non-Brahmin scholars who were in the thick of the national movement. Thanks to the personality of Mahatma Gandhi a complete polarisation did not materialise during the pre-independent era in the political scene. But the shadow-fighting went on unabated among the scholars to decide the precedence of one over the other after enforcing a neat, facile but historically unfounded, identification of Aryan, North, Sanskrit with Brahmin and Dravidian, South, Tamil with non-Brahmin. At the initial stage the Brahmin scholars at least some of them, were disinclined to give up their title to the joint ownership of Tamil because Tamil after all was their tongue too. But at the same time they were unprepared to surrender their identification with Sanskrit language which had enabled them to acquire the status that they enjoyed for so long in the society. They thus wanted the best of both worlds and spoke in favour of both.

<sup>15</sup> The most important among them were Vi-Ko. Suryanarayana Sastri (1870-1903) who changed his name into 'pure' Tamil, 'Paritimaṭ-kalaigñar' and the great Tamil poet Subramanya Bharati (1882-1921).

<sup>16</sup> S. Settar, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>17</sup> For an elaborate account of the growth of non-Brahmin movement in Tamilnadu, See Irschick, E. F., *Politics and Social Conflict in South India — The Non Brahmin Movement and Tamil Separatism (1916-1929)*, 1969.



Against this background, one may discern interesting changes in Sastri's ideas on the Āryan-Dravidian issue through the decades. In the late twenties he wrote: "The evidence already available is sufficient, however, to furnish conclusive proof of the origin and development of an independent Tamil culture which flourished for centuries before it was touched by extraneous influences. However difficult it may now be to define, in a scientific manner, the content of that culture, to deny its existence altogether can only be the result of ignorance or prejudice. it is equally certain that, at a time before recorded history begins, this Indigenous Tamil culture came under strong influence from Northern India, which for the sake of convenience and without any implication of race, may well continue to be called Aryan."<sup>18</sup> And in the mid-thirties he speaks of the culture of the Sangam age as follows: "The most striking feature of the culture of the age is its composite equality. It is the unmistakable result of the blend of two originally distinct cultures, best described as Tamilian and Aryan. There is no task more fascinating, and none less easy ... than that of disentangling the primitive elements of these disparate cultures, the stages by which they mingled and the consequences of their mixture."<sup>19</sup>

From this fairly non-aligned position, one may notice, a subtle yet distinguishable shift in Sastri's writings which appeared during next three decades. He becomes more assertive and less dispassionate in his views on the relative superiority of the Sanskrit language and culture. In a paper published in 1946-47, he declares: "The real truth of the matter is that Tamil, as we know it, does not contain a single line of literature that antedates its contact with Sanskrit influences... I say it merely to emphasise ... that Sanskrit is the pivot of our whole culture, and to show that Tamil culture is no exception to the rule."<sup>20</sup> And still later, he asserts: "History begins in South of India as in the North with the advent of the Aryans."<sup>21</sup>

Significantly, it was in the late thirties and early forties that the demand for secession of Tamilnadu first and then of Drāviḍanadu was

18 *AIHC.*, p. 5. Also *The Pandyan Kingdom*, p. 1.

19 *The Colas*, 2nd edition, p. 63; also see the footnote thereof.

20 *AIHC.*, p. 221.

21 *HSI.*, p.68. Also see his *The Culture and History of the Tamils* (1963) where Sastri describes the pre-Āryan Tamil culture as, 'rather primitive' and therefore the advent of Aryans 'constitutes the turning point in the history of the Tamils as in that of the rest of the Indian people' (p. 7).



raised by non-Brahman movement leaders. The old Justice Party was renamed as *Dravida Kazhagam* (D. K.) in 1944 and in 1949 there occurred a split in the party and *Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam* was born. Making steady progress, the DMK continued the demand for secession till the constitutional amendment in 1963 banning any demand for secession. When the D.M. K. formally gave up its demand for secession, Sastri did not fail to understand the significance of the changing political process in Tamilnadu and he observed in 1974: "The D.M.K. has now given up its demand for secession. C. Rajagopalachari's influence with the D.M.K. was considerable, in any event it was calculated to turn narrow communalism into broad nationalism. In 1967 elections the D. M. K. won . . . and C. N. Annadurai, a leader of great integrity and broad outlook, became the Chief Minister."<sup>22</sup>

Interestingly in his *Advanced History of India* published in 1970, Sastri appears very considerate in his assessment of early Tamil culture: "The Tamils of the Neolithic Age show a fair degree of civilization, as judged by the pre-historic antiquities of South India and the materials brought to light by excavations of graves. Tamil literature of the Sangam Age, though belonging to the early centuries of the Christian era, may well contain subject matter showing the cultural continuity of Tamil from Neolithic times."<sup>23</sup> He adds: "A remarkable feature of Tamil literature of the Sangam Age is the expression of delicate feelings and emotions of people of different regions in poems which portray events of war and love, in diction and style which owe little to Sanskrit."<sup>24</sup>

## V

The attention we have bestowed upon the above aspect in Sastri's writings would have been unnecessary or even unwarranted had he given it only marginal importance and not allowed it to permeate

<sup>22</sup> *LCIP.*, p. 165. Also see I edition (1966).

<sup>23</sup> K. A. N. Sastri and G. Srinivasachari, *Advanced History of India*, p. 19.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20. In fairness to Sastri, it must be mentioned that he kept on updating his chapter on Earliest People and Cultures in every edition of his *HSI* (1955, 58, 66) in the light of latest advances in the knowledge of pre-history of South India. But in the very next chapter captioned 'The Dawn of History: Aryanisation', he tries to prove, on the basis of literary evidences and later legends.



through his interpretation of early South Indian History and Culture. On the one hand, unlike some historians who consider the Aryan-Dravidian problem, 'a completely novel one',<sup>25</sup> Sastri traces its origin to almost 8th century A.D. and thereby gives it a high historical respectability. "In mediaeval times in South India", he writes, "there came up the rival legends calculated to support the views of the rival schools of thought; both admitted that the Vedic seer Agastya was the pioneer of the Aryanisation of the Tamil land, but one school held that he was also the creator of the Tamil language and grammar and Tolkappiyar was the pupil of Agastya; the other denied this and held that Agastya and Tolkappiyar had quarrelled and were enemies ... This opposition to Aryan influences identified with Brahmins and with Sanskrit has merged in modern times with the social and political movements of Justice, D. K. and D.M.K. parties."<sup>26</sup> On the other hand, Sastri takes great pains to convey and convince — particularly his contemporaries — that even in the period of Sangam classics, "... how the transformation wrought on the Tamil scene by northern practices and social patterns was an *accomplished fact* and which did not certainly leave the Tamil people *aggrieved or protesting*."<sup>27</sup> (Italics mine). He further asserts that the fusion of Aryan and Tamil culture (by which he only implies the fusion of Brahmans and non-Brahmans) was a 'happy phenomenon' in which 'the greater and lesser traditions of the participants commingled to produce a harmonization.'<sup>28</sup> How did this 'permeation of the Aryan way of life, habits and rituals' which is said to have resulted in social harmony manifest itself? Sastri comes out with an uncharacteristic argument: "The fact that social stratification did not display any indiscriminate or aggressive bullying or superiority complex was well indicated by the information, for instance, that although the boatman was lower in social grouping, all the castes moved in the boats while crossing waterways without observing any taboos."<sup>29</sup>

that the process of Aryanisation in South started somewhere about 1000 B. C. and reached its completion even before establishment of the Mauryan empire.

25 A. L. Basham, *Studies in Indian History and Culture* (1964), p. 29.

26 CCBAD., pp. 66-67; also HSI., p. 77.

27 SLCC., p. 46.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 87.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 45-46. Elsewhere Sastri writes: "The separatist principle (i.e., caste) has become basic to the historical Hindu society as we know, it is by no means easy to say if it is Aryan or non-Aryan in origin. Only the fact that this divine principle in its extreme form occurs only in India, while it is unknown in other countries which owe their historic civilization to the advent of the Aryans,



Further he holds the view that the 'central power' behind the 'socially well organised, ritually well-developed and commercially well established' life led by the people of Sangam age was 'a powerful monarchical system.'<sup>30</sup>

It is of some significance that it is in *The Cōlas* (2 vols.) the first edition of which appeared in the mid-thirties that we first come across Sastri's idea of a 'happy' and 'harmonious' Tamil society. "The history of the Cōla empire", he writes, 'belongs on the whole, to this earlier and happier phase of India's history, and we shall see that, in spite of much that appears primitive and even offensive to us, much greater things were accomplished by corporate and voluntary effort, *a greater sense of social harmony prevailed* and a consciousness of active citizenship was more widespread when the Cōla kings held their sway in Southern India than in *more recent times*.'<sup>31</sup> (Italics mine). Sastri, with penetrating insight, comes out with an uncommon understanding of the Indian society when he states in the same book that, "nothing in the history of Indian society is more remarkable than its fatal capacity to combine intellectual tolerance with social exclusiveness."<sup>32</sup> He also finds that "a considerable element in the population, especially among agricultural labourers, lived in a condition not far from slavery"<sup>33</sup> in the Chōla period. He also observes that "Each caste was more or less a hereditary occupational group with an active organisation for the regulation and protection of *its* economic and social interests", and conceives the Indian society on the whole "as a loose federation of strong self-regulating groups."<sup>34</sup> In spite of all these, the general impression he derives is 'one of social harmony' because "There is practically no evidence of ugly social conflicts and jealousies such as those between the right-hand and left hand castes, or between Brahmins and non-Brahmins of more recent times."<sup>35</sup> As enigmatic as this is Sastri's

points to the inference that it was perhaps basically pre-Aryan and non-Aryan", *CCBAD.*, p. 80.

<sup>30</sup> *SLCC.*, p. 47.

<sup>31</sup> *The Cōlas*, 2nd edition, pp. 446-47.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 644.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 555.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 546.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.* Interestingly in foot-note (no. 25) to the same chapter Sastri states: "The real history of the division between the right hand and left hand sections of society may indeed date from a much earlier time than we suspect or even the *Srutimāns* of the reign of Kulōttunga III believed."



assumption that it was the 'highly organised and thoroughly efficient bureaucracy' of the Cōḷa state which, by non-interfering with the free life and the initiative of local authorities and associations, ensured this harmony.<sup>36</sup>

Perhaps confronted himself with the question as to what went wrong with this idyllic image of social harmony in the centuries succeeding the fall of the Cōḷa empire, Sastri candidly admits: "The historian of India must perhaps remain a stranger to the bracing effects of a consciousness that his is a study of continuous and progressive tendencies steadily working for the amelioration of his fellow men. He cannot claim that in any sphere of human activity . . . there has been a steady advance through centuries towards a higher level of achievement . . . the student of India's past finds it hard to resist the impression that at some stage in her history there set in a rot, which spreading soon over all the spheres of life sapped its vitality and made for the continuous loss of her efficiency."<sup>37</sup> Years later while speaking on the social developments in South India after the age of Sangam classics, he again refers to this rot: "In later times, however, for reasons that are not quite clear but seem some way or other to have spread all over India, society became more pronouncedly hierarchical, caste crystallized and proliferated and the Brahmin claimed for himself social prestige and other privileges which roused the anger and envy of other classes."<sup>38</sup>

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 462. For a severe criticism on Sastri's interpretation of the Cōḷa state, see Burton Stein's critique in *Essays on South India* (pp. 64-91) edited by himself.

<sup>37</sup> *The Cōḷas*, 2nd edition, p. 445-46.

<sup>38</sup> *CCBAD.*, p. 65. It is noteworthy here that in his 'The Heras Memorial Lectures,' delivered in 1961, Sastri cites several observations of Louis de la Vallee Poussin from A. L. Basham's article in the *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon*, (p. 278) and concludes: "We hope that future historians of India will shed the negative and apologetic attitude arising out of an inner feeling that the history of our country is in many ways inferior to that of other countries like England and France and adopt a more positive and constructive approach to the interpretation of evidence and show that the history of India has a continuity and ethos of its own not in any way lacking in interest or institution. This would take more critical thinking than has so far been brought to bear on the subject." *SIH.*, pp.48-49.



## VI

Sastri's great concern over the acrimonious socio-political conflicts of his times and his longing for social harmony and happiness among his fellow men are indeed noble and worthy of emulation. That does not however make his attempt to present the early South Indian society as one which brimmed with harmony and happiness for several centuries and then went awry (disharmony, class-interests, envy, jealousy etc.) on account of an as-yet unaccountable reason, a convincing one. But, at the same time, with due apologies to Bury, 'We dare not deplore Sastri's limitations, for, they were the conditions of his great achievement'.

Having said all these, we would like to conclude with one final observation. K. A. N. Sastri, by his extra-ordinary performance in early south Indian historiography overshadowed his predecessors almost completely; eclipsed his contemporaries; most of his successors still stand too dazzled even to look at him critically. The time has perhaps come to cast off that spell and to open up a new vista in the historical studies of early South India. The day is now awaited when the historians, particularly from South India, will go beyond Sastri and discover a new meaning of their own past because sublimation is the essence of knowledge and progress.



## Sardar K. M. Panikkar (1895-1963)

BY

K. K. N. KURUP

Kavalam Madhava Panikkar, born in 1895 at Chalayil House of Kavalam Village, Ambalapuzha taluk, Kerala, is an eminent diplomat-historian and a prolific writer on many aspects of Indian life and culture. After primary education at Trivandrum he joined the Madras Christian College and later enrolled himself as a student in the faculty of history at Christ Church, Oxford. Panikkar was one of the first Indians to appear in the first class in history from Oxford and he was indebted to his own tutor, Arthur Hassal, a distinguished historian. He was awarded Dixon research scholarship for his meritorious distinction which enabled him to pursue research for sometime. He assisted V. A. Smith who was at that time writing the *History of India* at Oxford.

After returning to India he accepted the professorship in the Aligarh College and subsequently became the head of the department of history in the Aligarh Muslim University. He left the department in 1922 and for sometime served as the editor of *Swarajya* in Madras. There he maintained close contact with eminent nationalists and even went on deputation to Amritsar to study the Akali problem as requested by Gandhiji. He was one of the founding editors of *Hindustan Times* (1924) which he left shortly to visit England and study law at Middle Temple.

In 1928 he served Maharaja Harisingh of Jammu and Kashmir as an adviser. Later he left that career and became the Secretary to the Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes. As Secretary to the Chancellor he served on the Expert Committee which participated in the Round Table Conference in London. Since 1934 he was the foreign minister of the State of Patiala. Later he joined the service of the Bikaner State and was the Vice-Chairman of the Council of Ministers. Subsequently he was elevated to the position of Dewan of that State. As a representative of the Indian States in 1942 he attended the Pacific Relations Conference in Canada. He also attended the sessions of



Indian Constituent Assembly and even suggested for its historic mid-night session which Lord Mountbatten later described an arrangement to cope with an auspicious time recommended by the astrologers, on the eve of Indian independence. Panikkar was one of the members of the first Indian delegation to the United Nations Organisation.

His rich experience in the sphere of administration and diplomatic relation was well recognised by Jawaharlal Nehru who wanted to make use of it for building up a new image on India among the nations. From 1948 to 1959 he was put in charge of diplomatic posts in different parts of the world including People's Republic of China, Egypt and France. In 1954, for a short period he was appointed a member of the State Reorganisation Committee. In 1956 he was elected to full membership of the International Commission for a History of the Scientific and Cultural Development of Mankind. He was a member of the Rajya Sabha. At the end of his political career he again came back to the field of education and in 1961 became Vice-Chancellor of Jammu and Kashmir University. He died on 11 December 1963 as Vice-Chancellor of Mysore University.

Panikkar's career, one that of rich experience in the diverse fields of education, journalism, administration, and diplomacy gave him a thorough knowledge of Indian political cultural and economic problems. It also gave him a wider vision of the historical past of India and its civilization. Thus as a historian he devoted more attention to analyse what India was and describe what she should be in a changing world of reality. His varied experience and vast scholarship helped him immensely in his search of the historical past. His area of interest had developed from regional history to national history and subsequently to a wider range of Asian history. His contributions in these diverse fields are noteworthy and admirable. Further he took keen interest in the allied disciplines of political science, geo-politics, military science and international relations. He had put an imprint upon some of these subjects particularly in the Indian context.

#### *Defender of the Rights of Princely States:*

Panikkar's first published work was on *The Problems of Greater India* (1916) which appeared with an introduction by C. P. Ramaswami Iyer. While he was at Aligarh he pursued a study on *Sri Harsha of Kanauj - A Monograph on the History of India in the First half of the Seventh Century A. D.* (1922). This monograph was particularly intended to highlight



the Indian achievemants of that period under the poet-ruler who dedicated himself for the cause of Dharma. As a scholar he wanted to counteract some of the contemporary historical writings which emphasised the political chaos that existed in India at the time of Mohmed of Ghazni. A serious student of Indian history would find no justification of the author's comparison of Harsha with Akbar.

About two decades he was in the service of the Princely States and as such he was compelled to take a different course from the main stream of contemporary Indian politics. As an administrator and adviser to these States like Jammu and Kashmir, Patiala, and Bikaner, he studied the constitutional problems and other political involvements of the Princely States and turned to be a champion of their historical rights which had been adversely interpreted and often refused by Lee-Warner and other imperialist writers. Through his writings, Panikkar wanted to establish the rights of the native states and restrict the encroachments upon these rights by the Paramount Power or the British. In his *Evolution of British Policy Towards Indian States: 1774-1858* (1927), later revised as *Indian States and the Government of India* (1932), he wanted to justify the existence of Princely States. It was an answer to some of the academic questions raised by Lee-Warner. *The Working of Dyarchy in India: 1919-28* (1928) is an attempt to analyse the constitutional problems and administration under the reforms of Montagu-Chelmsford. He evaluated that the "British political tradition has become a part of the heritage of India" and the future of Indian constitution should be only on the basis of "responsible Government in the English sense." His scholarly work on *Federal India* (1930) written in collaboration with Col. K. N. Haksar deals with some of the vital constitutional problems faced by the Indian states. For instance they admitted that "if the Federal Executive is made responsible to a body elected on a *non-federal and unitary* basis, then the guarantees provided for the States will become illusory" (p. 120). The result according to the authors would be "a camouflaged annexation of the Indian States" (p. 121). One could easily ascertain how conscious were they with the rights of the princes and the native states. Such a situation abrogated the qualities of a nationalist historian.

Again some of the basic issues involved in the constitutional problems of the Princely States were discussed by Panikkar in another volume on *Inter-Statal Law—the Law affecting the Relations of the Indian States with the British Crown* (1933). His involvement in the affairs of Princely States made him an advocate of their rights, demands and status.



In the case of Lee-Warner, he was committed to the cause of imperialism. (See *Native States of India*). But for Panikkar he supported the identity of each native State on the basis that it provided "immense value to the diversified life of the mother land". Such an approach was against the larger interests of India as a nation and the moving spirit of nationalism in the country. Therefore his stand was rather confusing; he was supporting the rotten administration of many a native state.

A biographical study on *Gulab Singh* which appeared in 1930 (new edition in 1953 under the title *The Founding of the Kashmir State: A Biography of Maharaja Gulab Singh*) deals with the founding of the Kashmir State and its consolidation of authority over territories in Ladakh and Aksai Chin etc. In 1936 he brought another volume on *The Indian Princes in Council: A Record of the Chancellorship of His Highness the Maharaja of Patiala: 1926-1931 and 1933-36* dealing with the political affairs of the Maharaja of Patiala as Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes. The Chamber also stood for protecting the rights and privileges of the native States. After independence, states like Hyderabad, and Mysore opposed the very idea of projection of Indian authority over them. The Chamber of Princes opposed the cumulative growth of Indian nationalism and stood for maintaining separate identity of each native state. In reality the Chamber of Princes stood for Balkanisation of Indian territory. Panikkar evaluated the role of the Maharaja of Patiala standing out "in modern Indian history as a period of great achievement of which the princes as a whole and H. H. the Maharaja of Patiala may justly be proud" (p. 128). He pointed out that the Maharaja kept in mind the "wider interests of India". Simultaneously emphasised that the Maharaja "fought with unflinching courage for the recovery of their authority and dignity" and "improved the constitutional provision of smaller states" (p. 127). Here also Panikkar was defending the rights of the native princes and swimming away from the mainstream of Indian nationalism. Like their masters, the imperialists, many of the native princes took oppressive measures in the 30's against the Indian National Congress. This situation made his position more confused when compared his approach to the forces of nationalism.

Panikkar brought another volume on *His Highness The Maharaja of Bikaner*, a biography, in 1937. Next year a series of lectures appeared under the title, *The Origin and Evolution of Kingship in India* (1938).



In this he defended the political thought of the Hindus and stated that the kingship never developed into an autocracy which was common practice in Europe. This work provided a theoretical background of their existence and emphasised that the Hindu kings never indulged in aurocracy. In brief all these works, particularly related to the native states, traced and analysed the historical situation of the princely states in an imperialist context. Born in a native state, and underwent in the service of the native states for a long period, he justified their existence. His affinity towards them considerably influenced his historical writings. In reality the historian could not see how millions of people suffered in the native states like their counterparts under the British empire. Even in an era of nationalism his efforts were to substantiate the rights and privileges of the native rulers. As a paradox, they were against the forces of democracy and self-government. While identifying himself with those agents, he was not liberally subscribing to the cause of nationalism.

#### *On Kerala:*

Panikkar's two books published in 1931, *Malabar and the Portuguese and Malabar and the Dutch* (later in 1960 appeared as a combined volume with the title *A History of Kerala: 1498-1801*) traced the history of European expansion on the Western Coast. Although the Portuguese historians spoke of an Indian empire of India, he came to the conclusion that it was restricted only to certain settlements and that was also as an ineffective organisation. He further pointed out that the Dutch connection with Malabar was beneficial to the region. He found the entire period as one that "of the fall of the Nayar power in Malabar." Although he had cited some original sources for these two works, he had not exploited properly even the published and translated materials available at that time in the archives of Lisbon and The Hague. Some of the Dutch sources reveal the purchase of slaves from Cochin, Kayamkulam, Quilon, etc., and their sale in Batavia at a high percentage of profit by the Dutch. Further they established a system of triangular trade with South East Asia. Such aspects were not discussed in these volumes and they were restricted to political history. However, these works, give an account of the European expansion on Malabar Coast including the colonial policy of western powers.

#### *Indian Unity:*

During the 40's there was a basic change in the outlook of Panikkar regarding the Indian affairs. One could easily understand



this change being reflected in his historical writings. *The Future of East Asia* (1943) republished as *The Future of India and South East Asia* (1945), *India and the Indian Ocean - An Essay on the Influence of Sea Power on Indian History* (1945) and *Survey of Indian History* (1947) mark a distinct trend in his approach to history. So far he had concentrated on tracing the rights and privileges of the native states along with their constitutional problems under the British empire. Now he was conscious of the major problems of India as a nation and the future of South East Asia, as a theatre of anti-imperialist warfare. He evaluated that the future of South East Asia depended on the "development of a non-colonial and balanced internal economy". It was also emphasised that a free and stable government in India was the essential prerequisite for the success of any of the future scheme for South East Asia in general (p. 17).

In the essay on the influence of sea power he discussed the question of Indian defence which was virtually related to the command of the seas. He analysed the entire problem in the light of the theories on geo-politics. Alfred Lyall, a scholar-administrator, had traced the foundations of British Empire in India on its maritime power. Therefore the Indian security, as established by historical evidence, depended on the mastery of seas. As a historian, Panikkar invited the immediate attention of the Indian people to this vital problem. He had even foreseen the significance of Indian Ocean as a strategic place in the power politics.

*A Survey of Indian History* is a general survey from the earliest times to the present century. It is mostly intended for general readers and written in a lucid style. In his *Autobiography* he had stated how he was compelled to write a book like this

... Indian history was mostly written from the vantage point of Delhi. South Indian culture was apt to be neglected. Moreover, with the advent of the Europeans who called themselves Aryans we in India too had developed a kind of Aryan snobbery. My view was that Dravidian culture was of equal importance and that Hindu Culture was the product of their admixture and that neither the Muslim invasion nor European imperialism had altered this position. (Translated by K. Krishna Moorthy, pp. 184-5).

He wanted to write a book for establishing this particular view. He criticised the weakness of the European writings on India with these words:



Anyone could see that the so called basic documents on which it (Indian History) was based were mostly written by Europeans who had neither knowledge of nor respect for Hindu culture and whose purpose was to whitewash European imperialism of the past century. (*An Autobiography*, trans., p. 184)

Thus in his approach and analysis he was an anti-imperialist who tried to give some attention to the major historical developments in the south. For him, Aurangzeb was a martyr for the cause of India's unification. Although this work was not of a high quality in the eyes of professional historians, it was one of the finest flowers of nationalist historiography.

#### *Asianism:*

Since independence of India, he was on political assignment as a diplomat to countries like China. His new involvement later brought considerable change in his historical outlook which was reflected in his subsequent writings. On one side he was in search of Indian identity in an international community and on the other, the Asian solidarity against imperialism and power politics. His outstanding contribution, *Asia and Western Dominance*, appeared in 1953, represented this new outlook specifically the political image of the awakened Asia. This scholarly work is a critical survey of the European expansion and consolidation of authority in Asian states between 1498 and 1945. The European power much depended upon the control of the seas or its maritime strength. The Gama epoch in Asiatic history unleashed new historical forces. The colonial experiments in Asia and the *mission civilatrice* resulted in the growth of nationalism or a sense of Asianism. Panikkar rightly asserted that the new awakening was not purely based on Asian tradition. He stated that "any return to a purely Asian tradition is ruled out by the growth of social, economic and political forces which no country, in Asia had to deal with in the past." (p. 500) He even found fault with the missionary activities as a "planned effort" "to effect a mental and spiritual conquest" for "supplementing the political authority already enjoyed by empire." (p. 481)

This particular book invited criticism from Western reviewers like Seton Wetson and Herbert Luthy for Panikkar's attack on Christian missionaries. As a historian Panikkar projected the proposition of Asianism against Western imperialism. Most probably, the historical developments in South Asia including China must have influenced him



to look at the entire colonial system in an Asiatic point of view. Such an attempt was a "complete departure from the Anglo-Indian historiography in India" as stated by Tarasankar Banerjee in *K.M. Panikkar, The Profile of a Historian*, p.71). It inaugurated a new era in the historiography of Asia. However the work has its own limitations that it has not incorporated the political developments in West Asia or Middle East. He had further explained the Asian resistance against the West in terms of cultural and religious entities. But the main forces of resistance were related to the political and economic systems of Asia including the internal conflicts among the imperialists.

Some other works of this period like *In Two Chinas* (1952) and *India and China* (1957) also represent the spirit of Asianism. He had traced the early contacts and cultural relations between these two civilizations. The significance of India in an anti-imperialist struggle had been emphasised by him even earlier occasions. He stated that,

British rule in India was responsible for mortgaging the freedom of Asia and as long as Britain's empire in India continued, world peace would be in danger and the freedom of other Asian countries thus depended on India's own independence.

(Speech in Bierville Conference — *An Autobiography*, p. 64)

Thus he rightly estimated the Asian independence, a factor much depended on India.

#### *On Hindu Society and Institutions:*

While tracing some of the contemporary Indian problems, Panikkar analysed the Western impact on traditional Hindu society. A collection of essays under the title *Hindu Society at Cross Roads* (1955) is an attempt in this direction especially to evaluate the situation of challenge to the age-old institutions of Hindu society like caste and joint family. With admiration to Chaturvarnya he stated: "It would therefore be wrong to blame Chaturvarnya for the evils of Hindu disintegration. The real failure lies with Hindu law which by its prohibition upholds the divisions and renders normal readjustments impossible". (p.26).

Further he found the Hindu legal institution had no growth after Muslim invasion. New developments like abolition of untouchability, partition of joint families, social equality of women, and Civil Marriage Act were evaluated as factors of social change. For him the impact of Communism was a challenging factor of every aspect of Hindu life



(p. 74). But the ideologies like Gandhism, nationalism and socialism compromised with Hinduism. He admitted that Hinduism which withstood Buddhism, Islam and Christianity had nothing to fear from the Communist assault. (p. 76). He believed that the "legislating state would help to reestablish Hinduism in its position of honour among the religions of the world." (p. 114) This pious desire is merely an expression of his "Hindu bias" that the modern secular state is not committed to a particular religion.

In his *Geographical Factors in Indian History* (1955) Panikkar makes a preliminary study of the effects of geographical factors in shaping the history of India. He interpreted some of the main features of Indian history in the light of the theories on geo-politics, expounded by Mackinder. He believed that the unity of India was based on social domestic organisation of the Hindus, laid down in the *Grihyasutras* and on the universality of Hindu religion and the sanskritic culture. (p. 32). He pointed out that the Himalayas kept India isolated from the rest of the continent and thus she became introspective in her attitudes. (p.50). But the nature of 'introspection' and 'isolation', etc., had no meaning in the development of historical forces. Further there were many other factors which had augmented the unity of India. His work, *Indian Doctrines of Politics* (1955), traces the development of Indian political thought, particularly in the ancient period. He compared some of the Indian ideas with those of the West. He stated that,

We are content to repeat what Western writers have said in regard to their societies, the historical conditions under which they developed without understanding our own conditions and the traditions which are still powerful in our country. (p. 15).

His admiration for Hindu concepts of a political system was reinforced in this memorial lecture on Laski, "one of the germinal minds of England". Panikkar cited Sukra to show the wisdom of India that for her a sovereign was the salaried servant of the people.

Some of his occasional lectures were collected in *Studies in Indian History*. It traces India's impact on ancient Europe, Western Asia, etc., and describes how India had enriched the ancient civilizations by her policy of give and take. *The Principles and Practice of Diplomacy* (1956) is a collection of lectures delivered at the Delhi School of Economics. Another collection of lectures appeared in the same year with the title *State and the Citizen*. As a statesman he had highlighted some of the contemporary problems on national integrity, poverty and national welfare, the constitution, modern state, regionalism, etc., in these lectures.



Panikkar's Sorbonne lectures appeared as another collection in 1959 with the title, *The Afro-Asian States and their Problems*. In these lectures he had highlighted the vital problems of administration, education, society and economic system. He emphasised that many of these problems could be solved only through the vision of the leaders in these states, sympathy of advanced nations and the proper response of the public. He also criticised the missionary activities in these countries preaching and emphasising the European cultural and religious values. (p. 67).

In his problems of *Indian Defence* (1960), he had examined the major defence problems of free India. According to him the partition of the country had created two unnatural boundaries and thus India had to cultivate a "frontier mindedness." He had applied his historical erudition in analysing the contemporary problems of defence including the weakness of Indian navy. His opinion was that "a clear vision of the community alone gives strength to the defence of a people."

*In Defence of Liberalism* (1962) is another work in which he had analysed some of the trends of new liberalism and their confrontation with the Marxian concepts of proletarian dictatorship. National education, economic freedom, opportunity for women, secularism, trade unionism, adult suffrage etc., were some of the foundations of new liberalism. But he was also conscious that imperialism was based on the success of these factors. He stated that,

Maritain, Collingwood, Niebuhr and others who see the hand of god in history appeal to a strengthening of faith, presumably their own, as the true solution to the challenging problems of the period. (p.123)

But for Panikkar, a new civilization was not based on any particular faith, but on a combination of all. He emphasised the role of humanistic studies as a breeding ground of liberal thought and attitude, and academic freedom. As an educationist he equated liberalism with academic freedom.

Before his demise in 1963 he had completed some more works on Indian culture and other allied topics. Most important works among them is *The Foundations of New India* (1963) which traces the foundations and dimensions of a new India. He evaluated that the traditional India had considerably changed on account of the Gandhian ideology, new constitution, industrialization and Marxism. This particular work provides an in-depth analysis of Indian civilization in



transition. As a progressive historian he had appreciated these basic changes in a traditional society. With all his admiration for social values and ethics of Hindu life, he criticised vehemently its decadent institutions like caste and untouchability. As a man with strong affiliation to liberalism, he also rejected the Marxist ideology.

*The Himalayas in Indian life* (1963), *Essential Features of Indian Culture* (1963), *The Determining Periods of Indian History* (1963), *India-Past and Present* (1964) and, *A Journey Through China* are some of his minor works written in the last stage of his life. Most of them are collections of occasional lectures but reflect valuable thoughts on Indian culture and life. His inexhaustible admiration for Indian culture, a culture which had "lasting influence on most Asian countries" is the main theme of *Essential Features of Indian Culture*. He criticised the imperialist propagandists who had expounded several misconcepts like fatalism, renunciation, pessimism and other worldliness of Indian culture. He commented that the "Christian missionaries could see nothing good in India" (p. 25). He further suggested that the Indian tradition was continuous over 4000 years. He also discarded the myth of village bases and handicrafts economy of the country and appreciated the role of machinery. For him, even Charka was a crude form of machinery. (p.55).

When he describes the role of the Himalayas in Indian life, he becomes like a poet and finds its place in all aspects of Indian life including religion, mythology, art and literature of the Hindus. He finds it at a symbol of India. He invites our attention to the other side of the picture that for centuries the Himalayas created a false sense of security and a "magninot line" mentality among the Indians. Thus he gave us the warning:

The study of the Himalayan geography, geology, flora-fauna, its climatological phenomena and a hundred other matters connected with its life has now become most urgent for all students interested in the welfare of India (p. 38).

The development of Sanskrit language and culture, confrontation against Islam and Christianity, etc., provide the main theme of his work on *The Determining Periods in Indian History*. His admiration for Hindu culture finds a predominant place in this volume.

The foregoing survey of the major works of K. M. Panikkar undoubtedly reveals his substantial contributions to the Indian historical



writings. A recent scholar commented on Panikkar's "hobby of writing history" (*Bengal Past and Present*). But writing history was not a hobby for him; it was a dedicated mission. As pointed out by another scholar, Panikkar's *Autobiography* gives a detailed background of his major works. Many of them had been written with a definite purpose. In his works relating to the native states, he wanted to counteract the imperialist policy towards the princes. On account of his defence of the rights of native states he was not in good terms with scholars like Rushbrook Williams. (*Autobiography*, p. 89). Panikkar, who had been supporting the rights of the native states for over a decade later counteracted the intrigues of the Nawab of Bhopal and certain Hindu princes under the guidance of C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer for a third segment of Indian State under 'Rajasthan' in 1946. Thus at a right moment he supported the cause of Indian nationalists at the expense of his former affiliation to the native princes.

With all his affiliation to the new liberalism and some attachment to the Western Civilization, he remained an anti-imperialist. He suspected the role of the missionaries, as they were close associates of imperialists. He evaluated the role of Christian missionaries, particularly the Jesuits excepting St. Francis Xavier as "prejudiced and narrow minded in their approach to non-Christian ideas". (*Hindu Society at Cross Roads*, p. 68). For making such comments on Christian missionaries he had been criticised by K. A. Ballhatchet, Fr. Jerome D'Souza and others. While analysing the process of Western dominance in Asia, he found the missionary activities as a mental and spiritual conquest. There he comes nearer to the Marxist analysis that evangelism was a handmaid to the economic interests of the empire. However he never belonged to the Marxist school of thought. He paid due respects to individual missionaries like Roberto. Nobili and Gracia D'Orta.

Scholars have discussed much of the "Hindu-bias" reflected in his historical writings. He always eulogised the role of Hindu religion in providing the matrix of Indian civilization. He was of opinion that "Hindu religion has emerged triumphant from its 800 years of confrontation with Islam and the less dangerous but more subtle attack of Christianity." (*Hindu Society at Cross Roads*, p. 93).

Panikkar rejected some of the interpretations of the Western scholars regarding the trends of spiritualism and other-worldliness in Hindu civilization and stated that there was no "justification for the view that Hinduism preached a life of austerity or simplicity as an ideal." (An



Introduction to Vatsyayana"). He always acknowledged his close affiliation to traditional Indian culture and Hindu religion in his historical writings. However, this "bias" born out of a strong subjectivity never made him a sectarian in his outlook or a revivalist. He always stood against caste-system, untouchability and other social evils of Hindu society. The abolition of untouchability under the constitution was appreciated by him as a radical transformation in Hindu society since the time of Buddha. He was a great admirer of tradition and heritage. While describing the Malabar princes he stated, "The Nair Chieftains of North Malabar were leaders not by virtue only, of wealth or position, but heirs of proud tradition" (*An Autobiography*, p. 117). In the same way he was conscious of the proud tradition of India which was a tradition of the Hindus for him.

Most of the nationalist historians had maintained some affinity towards the traditional culture of the past, as the ideology of Indian nationalism had incorporated the sentiments of a cultural nationalism in protest against the cultural domination of the imperialists. However, Panikkar never attempted to analyse the inter-action of economic forces behind the cultural pattern of Indian society. Even as an anti-imperialist he did not contribute to an analytical study on the under development of the modern economic relations and the impoverishment of the peasantry in India under the colonial rule. Panikkar was the co-author of Unesco's volume, *The Twentieth Century* (Vol. VI, I and II in the series of *History of Mankind: Cultural and Scientific Development*) along with Caroline F. Ware and J. M. Romein. The Hungarian National Commission for Unesco criticised the above volume in these words:

... the authors instead of analysing factor merely describe the phenomena they review; they do not explain them, do not reveal the social and economic factors that produced them.

(*The Twentieth Century*, I, p. xix)

Such criticism can be pointed out against Panikkar's historical writings on India and other Asian countries.

#### *Panikkar and Malayalam Literature:*

Panikkar's talents were not restricted in the field of history alone. He has significant contributions at his credit to the various branches of Malayalam literature like novel, poetry, travelogue autobiography, short play, and *Champu*. Like C. V. Raman Pillai he adopted several themes from the late-medieval history of Kerala for writing historical novels.



One of the themes is from the history of the Mughals. In such novels he had beautifully described and reproduced the social, economic and cultural background of that period. In these novels also he had depicted the ideals of a traditional Hindu culture.

*Kalyanamala* (1937) is one of his famous historical novels which introduces the background of the reign of Akbar. As a historian Panikkar finds that the interests of the Hindu rulers had been adversely affected during the Mughal rule. He interprets that the "Din-Ilahi" of Akbar was an outcome of his desire for obtaining cooperation of Hindu rulers against the intrigues of Mughal nobles and Turks against the emperor. The historian novelist narrates that Prince Salim and the nobles had always violated the modesty of Hindu girls and thus an association of the Hindu youths and 'Sanyasins' had functioned against those tyrants. The novelist while describing the pomp and splendour of the Agra palace finds occasions to invite the readers' attention to poverty and impoverishment of the peasantry and their wretched life (p. 36). He analyses the factors which led to the cultural deterioration of the Hindus during this period. The novelist points out some of the dark sides of Mughal administration and palace politics.

*Parangi Patayali* (Portuguese soldier) is another historical novel which reproduces the background of the Portuguese expansion in Kerala and the traditional festivals like Mamankam. It traces the social and military system of the region along with the heroic fights of the Mappilas against the intruders.

Another work, *Kerala Simham*, (Lion of Kerala) is a famous historical novel by the same author on Kerala Varma Raja of Pazhassi palace who fought against the English East India Company from 1795 to 1805 in Malabar. The author depicts Kerala Varma as a symbol of patriotism and heroism. This novel had been very much popular among the freedom fighters of Kerala, because of its anti-imperialist character.

Another novel *Ugrasapatham* (1961) traces the palace intrigues in the court of the Zamorin at Calicut and the Portuguese attempts for conquest. It also describes the conspicuous decline in the volume of Arab trade at Calicut. The author extensively narrates on the warfare between the Portuguese and the Nayars and the defeat of the former. In another historical novel *Dhumaketu* (Comet), the main theme is related to the administration of Martanda Varma, the Dutch invasions and intrigues of Cochin raja against Travancore. It also describes the heroic



exploits of the Nayers. A large number of characters from the regional history including merchants like Rabi appear in this work.

Panikkar has written a few more historical novels like *Bhoopasan-desam* (Message of the King) and *Haidar Naik*. His novel, *Dorassini*, is an amusing one refuting the propaganda made by Katherine Mayo in her *Mother India* against the Indian womanhood. His *Dhruva Swamini*, a historical prose drama, relates to the period of the Guptas. Scholars like Jaya Sankar Prasad had dealt with this fascinating theme of the history of the Guptas, reconstructed by K. P. Jayaswal and others. *Nurjahan*, is another historical prose drama written by Panikkar depicting the life of this great Queen and her affairs. *Mandodari*, *Gandhari* at *Kurukshetra*, etc., are prose dramas written on epic themes.

Panikkar has translated some portions of *Kumarasambhava* by Kalidasa, the entire text of *Rubaiyyat* by Umar Khayam and some other Sanskrit poems. He has written a large number of sonnets, lyrics and poems. His poems on 'Inquilab' (Revolution) and 'Yenan' are entirely different from his other poems. In 'Inquilab' he finds the liberation of the depressed man who with a smile of new hope stands straight headed, proud, and holds a gun in his hands in front of the Peking tower. The poet-historian finds the old soldier as a symbol of awakened Asia. The poem is a tribute to the communist revolution. In his poem 'Yenan', he praises the glory of Chinese revolution and appreciates the labour force as the most powerful factor of the world. He adores the lions of the caves of Yen-an for having given a new message to the world.

On account of his rich experience in life and the style of presentation of events, his *Autobiography* (*Athmakatha*) has become an interesting piece of literature. A brief account of his literary works as given above reveals the fact that Panikkar has made substantial contribution to Malayalam literature.

#### *His Approach to History:*

As a prolific writer, Panikkar has dealt with many aspects of Indian history. He has also traced the major developments in the annals of Asian history, particularly the stages and interaction under colonialism. The Imperialist historians had so far attempted to write the history of Asia with a "Euro-Centric" approach. Panikkar with his spirit of Asianism refuted their old theoretical frame work of Asian history and tried to explain the developments in this continent in a new perspective.



As a historian he was fascinated with the contemporary historical developments in Asia after the second world war and subscribed to the philosophy of Asian nationalism.

In his presidential address to the Indian History Congress in 1955 he emphasised the need of rewriting the history of India as of a nation state. The British historians so far found it only as a geographical name and not as a political unit and thus concentrated on writing local and dynastic chronicles. Like Europe has a single civilization, India also has a single civilization, evolving through the ages, bringing the conglomeration of tribes to a common Hindu culture as a process of Hinduisation. So he wanted a reappraisal in the historical writings on India on the basis of a civilization. Such an approach made him entirely different from that of a professional historian. When a professional historian is more concerned with the archival sources and other information from authentic records and ready to follow the narrow path of Rankeism, Panikkar Like Henri Pirenne and Fernand Braudel, deviated from the beaten track, and applied his germinal imagination to reconstruct the historical past and analyse the core of the Indian or Asian civilizations. He had better expressed his particular approach to history or his philosophy of history in these words: "Nor can the history of any country be considered as a grand procession of great men or a majestic streams of progress broadening with every age, from precedent to precedent. But the History of a country has little value unless it deals with the conscious effort of a people to achieve a civilization, to reach better standards, to live a happier and noble life." (*A Survey of Indian History*, p. 235)

#### *Notes on Sources:*

This is only an attempt to introduce Panikkar and his writings. The list of his works given here is incomplete. Besides his own works, articles, and his private papers available in the National Archives of India, the following books and articles may also be consulted for any historiographical study on Panikkar.

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- Chacko, B.J., (ed.), *Sardar K.M. Panikkar, Shashtyabdapoorty*, Souvenir (60th year commemoration volume) 1964.
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- Tarasankar Banerjee, *Sardar K. M. Panikkar: The Profile of a Historian* (1977).







## **Dr. K. K. Pillay: A Veteran Historian of the South (1905 – 1981)**

BY

MRS. V. BALAMBAL

“Dr. K. K. Pillay is our esteemed elder historian of India, who has earned national as well as international reputation, by virtue of his significant contribution to historical scholarship. Dr. Pillay is an erudite scholar whose pen has given us numerous works of greater merit. He is quite at home with different aspects, problems and periods of South Indian History and this is well illustrated in the collection of his papers recently published. In his approach to historical writing, he is dynamic, straightforward, forceful, frank, argumentative and highly critical. Strict vigilance in self-criticism has been the hall-mark of his writings. Tireless pursuit to accuracy, passion for original sources, balanced approach and unfailing common sense in interpretation that mark the characteristic features of his historical works. In short, he is a brilliant star in the galaxy of historians of eminence in India, today. His conception of history is a lofty one. Its ultimate destiny is truth and accuracy . . . ” These are the words, used to honour Dr. K. K. Pillay, the late historian of Tamil Nadu when he presided over the first conference of the South Indian History Congress on 15 February 1980 at Madurai. He led the life of a dedicated historian till his last day.

Kolappa Pillay Kanakasabapathy Pillay, well known as K. K. Pillay, one of the giant historians of South India was born on 3rd April 1905. His parents were Kolappa Pillay and Parvathi Ammal. He was a native of Alloor in the Kalkulam Taluk in Kanyakumari District, formerly part of the native state of Travancore. He belonged to the Hindu Nañcinādu Vellāla Pillay community. He had his school and collegiate education in different places i. e., Alloor, Nagercoil and Trivandrum. After his post graduation he was appointed as lecturer in History at the age of 23, i. e., in 1928 in a government college at Tellichery under the composite Madras Presidency. He was transferred to Kumbakonam, Changanesary and other places and finally he became the Professor of history in the Presidency College at Madras.



During his service at the collegiate level, he aspired for his research degrees which he achieved in the years 1946 and 1948. His monumental work, 'The Sucīndram Temple' brought him the D. Litt. degree of the Madras University and he added a feather to his cap when he was awarded D. Phil. degree for his work "History of Local Self-government in the Madras Presidency" by the Oxford University.

Dr. K. K. Pillay succeeded V. R. Ramachandra Dikshidar as the Professor and Head of the Department of Indian History, University of Madras in 1954. But, he never abandoned the path of historical research. He delivered a number of lectures, prepared research papers and guided researchers. He also served as the Head of the Department of Area studies for a few years and after K. A. Nilakanta Sastri occupied in 1972 the coveted chair of the Director of the Institute of Traditional Cultures of South and South-East Asia in the University of Madras and served in the same capacity till his death on 26 September 1981.

Though he was greatly upset when he lost his wife in 1974, he did not lose heart because his devotion to history gave a soothing effect to his heart. He has one son and three daughters. He had his life's shock when he lost his first daughter. But he recovered from this blow and with a strong will and dedicated mind concentrated on historical research.

Dr. Pillay is an author of several books, both in English and Tamil. Regarding his early work, *The Sucīndram Temple* it is very much valued in the historical circle. James H. Cousin who wrote the foreword for this work states: "In the present unital study of one of the world's masterpieces of architecture and sculpture, Dr. K. K. Pillay has most admirably fulfilled one of my dreams that someone would arise with the knowledge requisite to demonstrating the history, philosophy, character and skill that aspiration and genius had brought together in one or other of the wonderful syntheses that have made Travancore one of the richest areas of art creation in India, the study of which has the possibility of contributing towards the understanding and ultimate solution of the tragic and inartistic problems of today".<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> K. K. Pillay, *The Sucīndram Temple*, Foreword, p. viii.



In *The Śucīndram Temple* he has profusely leaned on legends, literature and inscriptions. In this stupendous task he was unreservedly supported and supplemented by Shri Desiga Vinayagam Pillai, to whom the work has been gratuitously dedicated. It is a historical study of the temple at Śucīndram, Kanyākumari District, which affords a fertile field for investigation into different aspects of life spread over long vistas of time. In India art is the handmaid of religion and the houses of gods afforded scope for the expression of the artistic genius of the people. K. K. Pillay has traced the historical background of the temple, describing the salient features of the same and its management, its functionaries, the *pujas* and festivals. In olden days, this temple was a centre of all activities. Due importance is given to painting, architecture, and sculpture. *The Śucīndram Temple* has become a model to any researcher who has taken up 'temple study' as research theme. It is not out of place to mention here that following K. K. Pillay, many scholars have taken for their research the study of individual temples.

Dr. K. K. Pillay did not fall under the category of people whose specialisation is either ancient, medieval or modern period. He could handle any period with equal familiarity and candidness. As an oriental scholar he possessed the rich cultural tradition, which combined creditably with the occidental training he had.

"The History of Local Self-Government in the Madras Presidency (1850-1919)" is an outcome of a thesis, as mentioned earlier, submitted to the Oxford University in 1948 by K. K. Pillay. It traces the rise and growth of local self-government in the Madras Presidency. It also deals with the policy of the government of India, the establishment of various types of local bodies, their constitutional development, their nature of working, their sources of income and expenditure etc. It graphically depicts the measure of control exercised by the Provincial Government and its consequences, for the amount of freedom and initiative granted to local authorities decided the scope for self-government.<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Pillay's contacts with Prof. G. D. H. Cole and K. C. Wheare widened his horizon and he participated in many seminars and meetings in England during his stay there. When he headed the History Department in the University of Madras, these experiences came to his rescue in setting right many matters with regard to historical research.

<sup>2</sup> K. K. Pillay, *The History of Local Self-Government in the Madras Presidency* Preface.



It is the general view that unless political history is fully reconstructed studies on other aspects cannot be made in their proper perspective. Though K. K. Pillay agrees to that, he felt that history had been dominated for a long time by political history and that the time had come that more attention must be devoted to the other aspects of history. He insisted that all aspects of history i. e., political, social, economic, cultural and religious, must be given due importance, if a comprehensive history of any region is to be accomplished. There is a supreme need for the study of social history of various regions and sections of people of India. K. K. Pillay hoped that the budding historians of India would come forward and forge ahead and provide a full and dependable picture of Indian society and culture. His *Social History of the Tamils* is a master piece and it is not an exaggeration that scholars who are doing research in the 'Sangam Age' treat it as a Bible.

A few lectures delivered by K. K. Pillay under the auspices of Sir William Mayor Endowment have been published in the form a book entitled *South India and Sri Lanka*. It unravels the relations between the Ceylonese and the Tamils from the early time to that of the Later Pandyas. Likewise his addresses and research papers, published in various journals have been compiled and brought out as a book with the caption 'Studies in Indian History with special reference to Tamilnadu'.

Dr. Pillay's research work on 'Naṟṟinai in its Historical Setting' opened a new vista for research. The Sangam literary works (Pattu Pāṭṭu and Eṭṭuthogai) which were studied all these years only by Tamil scholars started attracting the attention of the historians too. While studying the historicity of the literature, the socio-economic and cultural aspects gleaned through the literature are also scrutinised. Following this trend, many scholars have taken many Sangam literary works and analysed them in their historical setting.

Another very touchy problem i. e., the caste system in Tamilnadu, is dealt with in minute detail by K. K. Pillay.<sup>3</sup> While tracing the origin and development of caste system in India with special reference to Tamilnadu, he concluded "my own conviction is that theosophy may come to the aid of eradicating the evils of caste . . . Theosophy stands for Universal Religion and it would be more appropriate if it receives

<sup>3</sup> *Studies in the History of India with Special Reference to Tamil Nadu*, 1979, p. 292 ff.



within its folds by active propaganda people of all castes among Hindus in the first instance . . . In fact, the aim of the Theosophic Society is to promote universal brotherhood without distinction of any kind.”<sup>4</sup> His monumental work in Tamil on *History and Culture of the Tamil People* is unique in giving a connected narration of facts from ancient to the modern times. He has also written the *History of the Cholas* in Tamil. Apart from these there are many other text books written in Tamil for the undergraduate and postgraduate students.

Dr. K. K. Pillay stressed that history should be written objectively. Though it is a well known fact that total objectivity is impossible in historical writing truth or facts nearer to truth must be focussed and stressed. He felt if a historian failed to achieve objectivity, the study of history would have no place in the scheme of the true assessment of the past. His conception of history is a lofty one and its ultimate target is truth and accuracy.

On Historiography, Dr. Pillay had certain concrete opinions. He insisted that historians should not allow certain ideologies of the present and future to threaten the historiography of our country. Though some of the historians of India follow the Marxian approach to history, K. K. Pillay was totally against it. He was of the opinion that history could not be employed as an agency of calculated propaganda.<sup>5</sup> He condemned the historians who adopted the so called original view for its own sake in the field of research and if they continued to do so, they were setting a bad precedence to the younger historians. “History as it happened must be told irrespective of what some people think of it today.”<sup>6</sup> Dr. K. K. Pillay regretted that the spirit of historical inquiry was conspicuously missing in India. ‘The quality of the research students’ output is far from satisfactory. Apart from the integrity of their own efforts which are tested, if at all, rather superficially the standard of their productions leaves much to be desired. It may not be long before a Ph. D. becomes a more formal passport to a certain kinds of scheduled appointments. In reality genuine research and original contributions should be attempted by mature and well-equipped scholars. Post doctoral research is of supreme importance”.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 410.

<sup>5</sup> *Proceedings of the South Indian History Congress*, (1980) Vol. I, p.7.

<sup>6</sup> S. P. Sen, cited in Dr. Tarasankar Banerjee, “S. P. Sen: The Historian Organizer.” *Journal of Indian History*, LVII, 458 (August-December, 1979).

<sup>7</sup> *Studies in the History of India etc.* p. 5.



It is the duty of the historian to write history unbiased and unprejudiced. K. K. Pillay criticised Ferishta for giving wrong information on the Muslim-Vijayanagar relationship and the one sided account of the battle of Talikotta. It is not easy for the court historians to write without bias or prejudice; Ferishta was not an exception. While K. K. Pillay appreciated the attempt of the British historians who wrote the history of India, he did not fail to point out their drawbacks too. He has expressed his happiness on an increasing body of Indian scholars stepping in to the field and making their contributions. But he had an appeal to the students of the North: "In my view it is desirable that more students belonging to North India should take to the study of South Indian History and *vice versa* ... Even the perspective of national unity in the historiography of India can be promoted by such attempts in a considerable measure".<sup>8</sup>

Dr. Pillai also felt that the researchers should develop an interest in learning as many languages as possible to enrich their knowledge. "Bands of scholars should specialise in the mastery of South Indian languages as well as Sanskrit, South Indian epigraphy, literature and manuscripts pertaining to the modern period."<sup>9</sup>

Dr. Pillai insisted that history must be studied as a social science to have a wider perspective. He says: "In my view a water tight division between the different aspects of history, like the political, constitutional, administrative, economic, social and cultural, is neither desirable nor practicable in all cases. Events, movements and tendencies in one field are influenced by those in another and in turn they react on to other fields of activities. Therefore, a rigid compartmentalism should be avoided while taking care to eschew redundant overlapping."<sup>10</sup> What he had suggested a few years before has come to practice now and inter disciplinary approach is permitted and pursued in the various University Departments.

As a seasoned researcher, with rich experience, he examines the role of a guide in historical research. It is not an exaggeration to say that some of guides of many reputed Universities seldom pay any attention to the researchers. But K. K. Pillay clearly stated that the success of a student equally depends on the guide as on the effort made by the

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.



student himself. He also clarifies that it is the duty of the students to explore and discover their interests and choose subjects suited to them. But in most of the institutions, it is the guide who assigns the topic of research. This tendency should definitely change.

In choosing the subject of research, Dr. K. K. Pillay opines that attention may be focussed on the history of common man, of their social and religious life, of their culture and civilization. Once the topic is chosen, the guide should show the ways and means of getting the source material and have periodical discussion with the student directing him in the proper way. "Regular meetings of the supervisor and the student at stated hours is desirable. Free and frank discussions and a helpful attitude on the part of the supervisor are of supreme importance. He should inform the student the availability of the material and place and how he could make best use of the same."<sup>11</sup>

Dr. Pillay insisted the importance of English language. Though he was a great writer in Tamil too, he felt, "the research theses must continue to be written in English at least for some more time to come. It is my conviction that for securing accuracy of expression and well balanced presentation the continuance of English is essential. At present no Indian language is so well developed as to facilitate its employment in the writing of research theses."<sup>12</sup>

On certain vital issues Dr. K. K. Pillay has differed from eminent historians of his time. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri who could be called as the father of South Indian History viewed that history begins in the South of India, as in the North, with the advent of the Aryans. K. K. Pillay totally disagreed with this view giving sound reasons and established that the history of South India was more ancient than the advent of the Aryans. Similarly, he opposed P. T. Srinivasa Aiyangar's view on Aryan and Dravidian invasions.<sup>13</sup> He completely differed from B. G. L. Swamy regarding the latter's view on the date of Devaram and the origin and history of the Kalabhras.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19. In this context, the writer who worked for her Ph. D. under the guidance of Dr. K. K. Pillay, wishes to state that K. K. Pillay followed what he preached. Each day of the week was assigned to each scholar and at the allotted hour the research scholar should meet the guide and have academic discussions.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>13</sup> *Proceedings of the South Indian History, Congress, Presidential Address* by Dr. K. K. Pillay, p.10.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p.19.



Being a meticulous observer of the society in which he lived, he seems to have formulated definite opinions on the caste system and the various evils attending to it. He condemned casteism in unequivocal terms. His detailed work on caste system deals with various aspects, i.e., origin and development of caste system in Tamil Nadu, the right hand and left hand castes, caste government, modern tendencies, the depressed classes, and the future of caste system.<sup>15</sup> It is not out of place to say that his last work *Studies in Indian History with Special reference to Tamil Nadu* has been dedicated to Dr. Ambedkar. Dr. K. K. Pillay categorically stated that a stateless society and human brotherhood was his ideal and his ideals of a rejuvenated Theosophical Society or the revival of the age old Hinayana Buddhism alone would tend to remedy the unfortunate evils which had multiplied themselves in the past.

As a teacher and matured scholar Dr. K. K. Pillay could not but be a disciplinarian. He records: "Discipline is the supreme need of the hour, discipline at the school, college and in society at large. One of the devices for securing it is by reviving faith in religion and imparting it into the various grades of society."<sup>16</sup>

As a renowned historian of India he had participated in many conferences and seminars. He was an active participant of the 20th Session of the All India Oriental Conference at Bhuvaneswar in October 1959. He participated in the first Tamil Conference held at Kuala Lumpur in 1966 and the Second Conference at Madras in 1968. He presided over the 32nd session of the Indian History Congress and delivered an illuminating presidential address at Jabalpur on 28th December 1970. When scholars and historians of the South decided to form an association and held the first session of the South Indian History Congress at Madurai on 15 February 1980, the mantle of presidency fell on the robust shoulders of Dr. K. K. Pillay. His presidential address was a masterly exposition of the sundry problems connected with the studies and research on South India.<sup>17</sup>

Though he was to preside over the History section of the Fourth World Tamil Conference held at Madurai in January 1981, he was unable to participate due to indisposition.

<sup>15</sup> *Studies in the History of India*, etc., pp. 292, 417.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 444.

<sup>17</sup> *Proceedings of the South Indian History Congress, 1980*, Presidential Address.



As the Director of the Institute of Traditional Cultures, Dr. Pillay used to conduct monthly seminars. He was very punctual and would never allow the speaker to cross his limit in time as well as speech. He was also editor of *The Bulletin of Traditional Cultures*, a research journal of the Institute.

Intellectually Dr. Pillay stood like a colossus among South Indian Historians but physically he was short statured. He seems to have developed a fascination for western dress. He has left an indelible imprint both in the national and international level. He was a hard task master and with his strictness and discipline, to a certain extent, he was feared by the students. But once approached with intellect, interest, aptitude and perseverance he never failed to render his helping hand. In spite of being stern faced and curt in his talks, he had humanitarian approach in his dealings.

Though he was a notable historian, he stated, "I am conscious that some of my views may not be acceptable to many. But that is no reason why I should not give a frank expression to my convictions. Let there be a judicious appraisal which is none too common." It unravels the spirit of a true historian; it is also a clarion call to young scholars who like to come up. He warns that chauvinism, regionalism, linguism and communalism are dangerous and they threaten the objective approach to history. But he consoles that his despondent apprehension is likely to vanish with the growth of time and promotion of real scholarship.

To his colleagues, it was a pleasure to work under him; to his students it was a rare fortune to be guided by him. His didactic guidance and scholarly approach have left an inerasable imprint on the wards. Diligent and serious in academic matters, Dr. Pillay could activate even the indolent and lethargic. As a historian and teacher he is immortal through his writings and the moulding of a good number of scholars in the manner, in which he visualised. Now it is the task of the young scholars, whom he nurtured, to come up and prove that the work of this historian turned teacher hasn't gone unrewarded.







## **Narendra Krishna Sinha : The Scholar Extraordinary (1903–1974)**

BY

TARASANKAR BANERJEE

### **I**

Mussolini once said, "I am not a man but an event." Dr. Narendra Krishna Sinha may be described as an event in the realm of historical research in modern India. Almost a phenomenon during his own life time he was born in November 1903 of the famous Sinha family, originally of the Kandi Subdivision of the Murshidabad district of West Bengal. The family migrated from Kandi to a place near Rajshahi, now in Bangladesh, towards the close of the 18th century and thence to Baroihati in Natore. The second son of his father, Narendra Krishna was actually born in the house of his maternal grand-father at Chatarpur village. He inherited a rich family background. Chaitanya Krishna was his grandfather who was an accomplished Persian scholar and served in the Nimak Mahal. His father, Promode Krishna, entered the judicial service, although he had passed M. A. examination in English from the Presidency College at Calcutta in 1878.

Narendra Krishna had his early education in the Bholanath Academy in Rajshahi town. Unfortunately, at that young age he lost his parents and the family had to shift to the village home at Baroihati. Luckily his eldest step-brother, Gopendra Krishna, came to the rescue of the entire family and reared Narendra Krishna and his elder brother Bhupendra Krishna with loving care. He resumed his studies in the P. N. High School of Dighapatia, a place well known for the Raj family there. He passed Matriculation examination in 1920 from this school and was admitted into Rajshahi College wherefrom he passed I. A. examination in the First Division securing 'Distinction' in History. Narendra Krishna came to Calcutta for higher studies, got admission in the Presidency College and graduated in 1924 with First Class Honours in History. In 1926 he took his Master's Degree in History from Calcutta University



and was placed 1st in First Class. His long and illustrious research career started shortly after his M. A. He concentrated himself at the outset on the career of Ranjit Singh, the famous ruler of the Sikhs and the results of his labours were embodied in a dissertation which earned him the Premchand Roychand Studentship in 1931. The Ph. D. degree was awarded to him in 1936. The research career thus initiated knew no stopping till his death on 20th November 1974 in Calcutta. For nearly half a century he was virtually submerged in historical research of unique dimension. A none too affluent man his main capitals were indefatigable energy, steadfast devotion to scholarly work and receptive hunger for new ideas which widened the horizon of the historian's mind.

Though there was nothing spectacular about his service career, Narendra Krishna rose steadily step by step to a great height. He started as a Lecturer in history in Midnapore College which corresponded to his initiation in historical research. He regularly came from that distance to carry on his research in Calcutta and this painstaking devotion to Clio was to pay him rich dividends in later life. He shifted to Calcutta and served for some time in Diocesan and Ashutosh Colleges in the city. With the expansion of the history department of Calcutta University, he got a chance to join it as a Lecturer in 1932. Ultimately, in 1955 he was appointed Ashutosh Professor in Medieval and Modern Indian History and remained the Head of the Department till his retirement in 1969. He was the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Calcutta University during 1967-68. Side by side with his University service, he contributed much to the cause of historical research in Bengal as the Editor of *Bengal Past and Present*, the organ of Calcutta Historical Society, for little over two decades since 1953. The pages of that journal during all those years bear a deep imprint of Narendra Krishna's scholarly excellence. During his life time Dr. N. K. Sinha was not denied his due recognition by the academic world and he had won several laurels. In 1949 he was Sectional President (Modern India) of the Indian History Congress held at Cuttack. As if to complete the cycle of the same body, he was chosen General President of the Indian History Congress to preside over the Benares Session in 1969. He was also actively and intimately concerned with the problem of organisation and management of records in the country and served as a member of the Indian Historical Records Commission between 1938 and 1971. He strove hard to set the house in order so far as records in West Bengal were concerned. He was President of the West Bengal Regional Records Survey Committee from 1966 onward. He edited a number of Reports under the auspices of the Regional Records Survey Committee which provided



valuable assistance to researchers particularly. As a member of the Government of India Delegation he visited several archives in the U.S. S. R. He also visited London and Heidelberg Universities on invitation. Crowning everything, the Asiatic Society of Calcutta honoured him with the award of Sir Jadunath Sarkar Gold Medal in recognition of his unique contribution to the cause of Indian history.

## II

Narendra Krishna Sinha was a prolific writer. For nearly half a century he contributed a large number of books, articles, reports, sketches and review articles, a full list of which can easily astonish any person with some academic interest.<sup>1</sup> His writings may be divided into two broad groups — political and economic — apart from a sprinkling of biographical writings. It is also interesting that his own academic life witnessed a kind of evolution and was divided into two periods each having a particular characteristic. During the first period extending from 1926 to 1950 his primary interest was in political history which was so common a trend in those days. From the late forties there was a gradual shift in his research interest and he became deeply involved in the domain of economic history of modern India, particularly Bengal. From 1950 onwards he was totally engrossed in the problems of economic history of Bengal and tried hard to develop this branch of Indian history by his own researches and by prompting scholars to undertake research in economic history of modern India. His initial interest in political history is quite understandable, as that was the prevailing trend in Bengal in the late twenties. But it is not quite clear why and how there came that significant change in his primary research interest. With growing maturity and better understanding of India's historical past Dr. Sinha became aware of the shortcomings as well as inadequacy of British Indian historiography. Later, in his General President's Address to the Banares History Congress in 1969 he gave a subtle clue to his own changing research interest in the past: "The pioneering and patchwork period of our survey history is over for the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the old English style we confined ourselves to the details of the events of political, military, administrative and constitutional history. But it is open to us now to

<sup>1</sup> For a full list see *Bengal Past and Present*, January-June, 1976: "Narendra Krishna Sinha Memorial Volume."



study social, economic, religious and cultural history of India in all its complexity and variety. These are the branches in which we should excel."

Narendra Krishna made an entry in the scholarly world with his monograph on *Ranjit Singh*, first published in 1933. One should not miss the fact that nationalistic fervour reached its high peak at that time and many Indian scholars were looking for historical heroes who left a trail in British-Indian history. But certainly he was not looking for an opportunity to pick up a hero and study him in the way some nationalist historians had been doing. Later in life, he told in a reminiscent mood: "After taking my M. A. degree in history in December, 1926 the first thing I did as an unemployed young man was to walk into the office of the Imperial Record Department (now National Archives of India), which was then located in Calcutta, and apply for permission to see all relevant records relating to Ranjit Singh."<sup>2</sup> He was attracted to Ranjit Singh because he "occupies a unique place in Indian History" (Preface to the 1st edition). Dr. Sinha laid bare his objective in the Preface to the 1st edition of the monograph: "The present monograph does not aspire to replace the earlier works of Cunningham, Lepel Griffin and Latif . . . It has been mainly my aim to elucidate in the light of new evidence the relations of Ranjit Singh with the Afghans on the one hand, and his Indian and British neighbours on the other. . . . An estimate of the Sikh military system has been given in the light of Dr. Surendranath Sen's criticism of the military system of the Marathas . . . "The work was thoroughly revised and rewritten in the second edition in 1945 and the usefulness of his work is proved by four editions of the monograph. It was also translated into Punjabi by the Punjabi University at Patiala. Sinha did neither resort to hero worship, nor unnecessarily project him in a distorted light, even though his work was mainly based on English documentation. However, there was a kind of defiance of traditional views on Ranjit Singh in Sinha's monograph. He tried to present the illustrious Sikh ruler in his true perspective unconcerned by what others sometimes said about him. Thus Sinha writes, "His early years were spent in dissipation and indulgence. Whether this was done on set purpose, as some European writers assert, or whether this was due to the lax morality of the times cannot be ascertained with any certainty." Sinha was really balanced in his judgment of Ranjit Singh. He did not spare the Sikh ruler for his lapses, but gave him the due where it should be. Sinha observed that "Crude, dynamic and vigorous, this fostering

2 Benares Presidential Address.



despot was a very concrete and compact man..." (p. 187 of 1951 edition). He also noted that "even in his (Ranjit's) mature life we find irrational behaviour along with commendable self-restraint" (p. 187). Narendra Krishna found Ranjit Singh as "a Supreme example of an intellect without a conscience." (p. 190) But at the same time Ranjit was acknowledged as "the last great constructive genius among the Sikhs" by N. K. Sinha. Interestingly in his estimation of Ranjit Singh, Sinha came very near to what Tagore had written in his essay *Shivaji O Guru Govinda Singha*, though there was no indication whether he borrowed from Tagore. Sinha wrote: "He (Ranjit) did not breathe into the hearts of his people any noble sentiment that would have held them together after his death..." (p. 190). Tagore had written: "The failure of Ranjit lay in the fact that he could not disseminate forces of noble inspiration which could sustain the Sikhs after his passing away" (translation is mine). Narendra Krishna, however, concluded that "Ranjit's failure was inherent in the very logic of events" (p. 192). In the political account of Ranjit Singh, Dr. Sinha significantly incorporated a statement of revenue and expenditure of Peshawar as gathered from the papers of Lachmi Prosad who was the *Diwan* of General Avitabile. A recent scholar has rightly remarked that "in this wayward gesture it is now possible to read the signature of the later historian."<sup>3</sup>

The investigation about Ranjit Singh necessarily brought Sinha to an examination of the backdrop and hence his *Rise of the Sikh Power* in 1936. His objective in this slender but highly useful volume was "to trace the history of the Sikh struggle for independence in the eighteenth century and Sikh rule in the Punjab before the advent of Ranjit Singh" (Preface to the 1st edition). He claimed that he tried "to illuminate an obscure corner of Indian history..." Narendra Krishna was conscious of the fact that looking at historical past varies from person to person lending a particular shade to the work that is produced. He wrote in the Preface to the 2nd edition (1946): "Historical judgements will always be influenced by values to which different minds will attach a different qualitative scale." Even to Sinha, 18th century India appeared differently in 1946 than it did towards the end of his academic career. He wrote in Chapter I of the volume: "The history of India in the eighteenth century is mainly a record of anarchy and confusion, selfishness, cowardice and treachery, unpatriotic betrayals and horrible reigns of terror, the tyranny of the strong, the agony of the weak and the futility of isolated attempts."<sup>3</sup> It was, no

<sup>3</sup> *Bengal Past and Present*, op. cit., Article on Narendra Krishna Sinha by Ashin Dasgupta.



doubt, an excellent exposition but it was so akin to the idea of British historians who viewed 18th century in Indian history as nothing but a dark age. The above observation actually marked the initial stage in the evolution of Sinha's historical thinking when he was unable to shake off British legacy altogether. Towards the end of his career, Narendra Krishna moved away from his earlier views and was pondering over a re-assessment of the 18th century. This is clearly visible in his incomplete work on the 18th century in Indian history. Whatever that may be, he commented that the gloom of the 18th century was "relieved by the story of the rise of Sikh political power, as a result of the collective endeavour of a united people..." (p. 1). He also opined: "A nation was up in arms against its enemies and it is the collective efforts of the masses rather than individual achievements that ultimately made the revolution a success" (p. 2). Apart from a chronological treatment of the rise of the Sikh power, the monograph was greatly enriched by a good description of 'Polity, Economy and Military Organisation of the Sikhs under the Misls' (Chap. VIII).

From the North West Narendra Krishna Sinha turned his attention to the South where in Mysore another historical hero, Hyder Ali, was challenging the emergence of the English power in the subcontinent. The quest was the same as in the case of Ranjit Singh with only more attention to the civil administration and a military system that sustained the Mysore challenge against the more resourceful East India Company. First published in 1942 *Hyder Ali* by N. K. Sinha had four editions which indirectly proves the excellence of the work. About the nature of the work he wrote: "This work is not a history of Mysore from 1721-1782, nor specifically a biography of Hyder. It is a study in biographical form of a typical figure of 18th century Indian history. While not neglecting personal details, this work is concerned primarily with military and diplomatic activities" (Preface to 1st edition). While studying the career of Hyder Ali, N. K. Sinha noted three unequal periods each having a distinct character. The first period extending from 1749-1761 witnessed Hyder's rise from obscurity to power. The years between 1761 and 1778 indicated a predominantly anti-Maratha phase of his career. A deep anti-British feeling characterised the closing period between 1779 and 1782. In this work Sinha worked out very logically the impact of the 3rd battle of Panipat on the political situation in the South, particularly on Mysore. He rightly pointed out that "the disaster of Panipat diverted Maratha pressure from territories lying south of the Tungabhadra, leaving Hyder absolutely free to pursue his plan of advance."



N. K. Sinha's *magnum opus* was *The Economic History of Bengal* in three volumes for which he was better known throughout the country. Since the mid forties he developed a keen interest in economic history which became his first love so to say since the early fifties. He invested all his energy and attention to the pursuit of this branch. *Midnapore Salt Papers* (1781-1807) edited by him provided enough indication as to what was there under the sleeve. The first volume of '*The Economic History of Bengal: From Plassey to the Permanent Settlement*' came out in 1956. According to Dr. Sinha's admission in the 'Preface' "the origin of this work goes back to 1946." It contained an assortment of problems with a bearing on trade and commerce along with producers of some selected sample commodities which were intertwined with trade operations. Though the importance of the work and the wealth of information can be easily appreciated by all concerned, Sinha appeared to have been overpowered by the volume of primary materials which he had painstakingly collected from Bengal Record Office. They remain somewhat undigested making the production somewhat disconcerting. "The matter was heavy and the style curiously unformed. Professor Sinha stood too close to the documents and the theme was less than clear."<sup>4</sup> Perhaps he was conscious of this shortcoming and explained in the 'Preface' that the "order of the topics has been determined to a large extent by the nature of the documentary materials."

The second volume of *The Economic History of Bengal* covering the same period appeared in 1962 and established Narendra Krishna as an acknowledged mentor in the branch of economic history. He had certainly moved away from the legacy of Jadunath Sarkar and followed the footsteps of R. C. Dutt who had opened a new window in the world of Indian historical knowledge by his celebrated work in two volumes on *The Economic History of India*. Sinha concentrated on Bengal to make the study more penetrating and instructive. There was an integrity of the theme which ran through the volume dealing with land-revenue history and agrarian relationships. As he himself pointed out in the preface that in this volume he had to change his method to suit the nature of his materials and a chronological sequence gave unity to the chapters. This is certainly a much better written volume and he had overcome the initial disadvantages of a pioneering scholar in an untrodden field. He found his own style in tackling economic history which was still unfolding its pages in India. He started with a

4 *Ibid.*



description of the Mughal land revenue system under Murshid Kuli Khan who provided the main stem in rural Bengal till permanent system modified the old environment. The volume ended with a general survey of rural and urban Bengal at the end of the 18th century and this was a fitting finale to the kind of study he presented in this volume.

Completing the series, the third volume of *The Economic History of Bengal* came out in 1970 and it covered the period between 1793 and 1848. Of the two terminal dates the last one is rather unorthodox but significant. Here Sinha rejected the conventional outlook and looked at economic history not from the point of view of government policies but from institutional changes. To explain his stand he wrote: "The insolvency of the Union Bank and the failure of almost all Indo-British ventures in Bengal mark the end of one phase of Bengal's [and India's] economic history." The volume seems to be a kind of spill over of ideas of the earlier volumes and a sort of complementary work. Here again Sinha does not develop a single theme to its logical end; but deals with several aspects of the economic history of the period, like trade, industry, banking and capital formation. The volume ends with an overview of 'Bengal in 1848' which is certainly more humanistic than technical in its presentation. One can easily detect that Dr. Sinha had started a new search — a socio-cultural explanation of economic history. While examining the hindrances to capital accumulation, Narendra Krishna noted: "From the dull records of disputes in law courts emerges the picture of a typical banian in retirement in Banaras or Brindaban. He has renounced his earthly riches in favour of his household gods and his heirs. He moves from temple to temple clad in loin cloth with only a namabali . . ., protecting his bare frame from the severe winter of upper India, his thin limbs contrasted with his old corpulence, in his right hand a string of beads, his eyes radiating a glow of love for his fellowmen and a quiet tenderness for all living creatures. Compare the mellowness of this exquisite evening of life with the overdrawn colour painting of Burke and we can easily explain why Hinduism was a deterrent force in the growth of capitalism in Bengal." (p. 96). In the x-ray of 'Bengal in 1848' (last chapter) we also find the same kind of projection. Sinha wrote: "In Bengal in the nineteenth century — urban and rural — there was a sense of social obligation which must be regarded as curious according to western standards. Charity began at home but did not end there. There were hosts of dependent relations to be maintained. Unemployment had no terrifying prospect for a member of a Hindu joint family. He would be duly married when grown up. If he had children he knew that they would be



clothed and fed and given at least elementary education. In this patriarchal environment relations could not always have been idyllic. There were far too many social pressures and social demands . . . But the distinctive note was social obligation, not individual responsibility. The capitalist spirit may be as old as history. But in such an atmosphere industry and initiative could not develop. There was an atrophy of individualism. Attitudes, traditions, fears and aspirations were all against economic enterprise" (p. 133). In other words, Narendra Krishna Sinha was on the threshold of projecting a new vision of the economic man who was deeply conditioned by the inherent social living and in the process was transcending, rather unperceived, the limits of acknowledged documentation of economic history. A dry-as-dust but prestige-conscious economic historian of today may look at Dr. Sinha's realisation as something irrelevant to the study of economic theories and models in the historical perspective. Sinha may be at the most ignored by such a brand, but his vision cannot be rejected altogether, simply because he was exploring a new horizon in the economic history discipline. It remains to say at the end that Sinha viewed the development in Bengal as a typical example and not an exception. He aptly wrote in the Preface to the third volume: "Bengal was the hinge of British commerce in the east. The economic history of Bengal is . . . in many respects the economic history of India."

There is a fond popular misconception that during the later part of his career Dr. N. K. Sinha was interested only in economic history relegating every other thing to a secondary place. But a glance over his works during the last twenty years of his life will disprove this. This was a highly productive period and Sinha was unfolding himself in various fields, with economic history as the pole star of his academic pursuit. The scholarship of Sinha was like a living cell which tends to expand in different directions. He made a tryst with records when he edited *Midnapore Salt Papers* (1781-1807) in 1954 followed by *Fort William — India House Correspondence*, Vol. V and *Selections from Ochterlony Papers* (1818-1825) in 1964 thus establishing a mastery over the mute evidences of history. In 1967 he edited with an introduction J. H. Little's *House of Jagat Seth* under the auspices of the Calcutta Historical Society. In the same year he edited *The History of Bengal* (1757-1905) which sought to complement the work of Jadunath Sarkar. This is a highly useful volume for both students and researchers in Bengal's historical past. Incidentally, this was the only publication under the initiative of the History Department of the University of Calcutta till the retirement of N. K. Sinha.



In the midst of his editing works, Sinha engaged himself in biographies. In 1964 Asutosh Mookerjee Centenary Committee entrusted him with the work of writing the biography of Sir Asutosh. He had some initial hesitation as he himself doubted his competence (See Preface). But his sincere efforts and mature scholarship could easily produce an excellent biographical work on Sir Asutosh in 1966, which still remains a standard one. In the 'Preface' Sinha made it clear that "this is a biographical study more in historical than in personal terms. I claim no special competence as a biographer. I have, however, tried to convey to succeeding generations the atmosphere in which Asutosh Mookerjee lived and worked." This volume is enough to show how N. K. Sinha was at ease even in respect of biography-writing which is poles apart from political or economic history. Shortly before his demise in 1974 he contributed, on invitation, a sketch on Calcutta and a biographical account of 'Subhas Chandra Bose' in *New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 3. This was certainly a great recognition as the editor wrote to N. K. Sinha: "I hope that we will be able to count you among the many authorities who have already become a part of this project."<sup>5</sup> Narendra Krishna Sinha entered the scholarly world with a biographical work, and made an exit with a biographical write up. In between the scholar's career ran a complete cycle.

### III

Narendra Krishna Sinha had striking views about modern Indian historiography and historical methodology. It is very difficult to put him into a particular class. Perhaps he was a class by himself unhindered by what others were doing in the field of research and he had few or practically no parallel among historians of modern India. On the eve of his retirement he wrote, "I prefer to plough my lonely furrow."<sup>6</sup> One remarkable thing about Sinha was that he never ceased to grow till the end. He was always teaching himself and learning from the varied challenges of history. After his retirement he did not give up the quest for the new. "Retirement does not mean idleness but perhaps honourable ease,"<sup>7</sup> according to him. He radiated new light among his research scholars so that they can explore new areas of study. He

<sup>5</sup> *Bengal Past and Present*, May-August and Sept-Dec., 1974.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. III.

<sup>7</sup> Benares Presidential Address.



believed in continuous progress as well as a kind of evolution in historical ideas. He remarked: "Subjective aspects of human behaviour are not universal. They are historical variables. History is therefore so rich in challenge. The response is always inadequate. History is never written once and for all. It offers . . . endless series of courts of appeal and is always ready to reopen closed cases."<sup>8</sup> This is why Sinha remained a student throughout his life and could easily pinpoint the neglected areas of Indian history. In his General President's address in the Benares History Congress in 1969 Narendra Krishna observed: "Urban history and social history in general have been practically ignored so long. Every great city has a history of a very complex growth. This complexity, in all its features, has to be analysed. Calcutta will perhaps have such a history before long in which the city's two towns, the English town and the Indian town, the commercial community, the great bazaars, the daily life of the people will for the first time be adequately described from a historical perspective. In this manner we would have the history of Bombay, Madras and all other big cities in India and a comparative study of them all." In the same manner Sinha pointed out in 1971: "No one so far as I know has devoted much attention to the subordinate Indian officials, their place in the administrative system, their attitude and their contribution. More than once I drew the attention of research workers to this neglected subject of research. It involves slogging work and does not perhaps provide the security of methodological shelter and much scope for pop sociology."<sup>9</sup> It is well known that Dr. Sinha's pleadings did not go in vain and both these areas recently captured the imagination of Indian scholars. The tenacious scholar who started with political history and ploughed through the economic history in a rather pedestrian manner could give the younger generation a judicious direction of a new haven.

Narendra Krishna Sinha was keenly aware of the shortcomings and imbalances of British Indian historiography. He was deeply sensitive mainly about three aspects of British Indian historical writings on modern India: (1) *Excessive, almost inclusive, emphasis on political, diplomatic and military history*. He often fondly referred to what Voltaire had remarked about the Gauls: "It seems that for fourteen hundred years there have been none but Kings, Ministers and Generals in the Gauls." He himself remarked that "it was history without the

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Bengal Past and Present*, July-Dec., 1971.



people."<sup>10</sup> Sinha, however, found it quite natural that British historians of British India would dwell particularly on political and military history. (2) *One sided or partial presentation of India's historical past.* Scanning those writings he found that in most of them the British official mind was at work and the civil service mind at the bottom. Sinha was much impressed by H. T. Prinsep's 'Preface' to the Memoirs of Amir Khan wherein he wrote: "We conquer and take the country and make out our case before the world. These we combat with are dumb or silent. Everything is presented *Couleur de Rose* for European valour, European skill and energy, moderation and integrity and whatever other virtues the narrators might choose to claim for their compatriots . . . very seldom is a lone voice heard on the other side or if a small cry is raised it speaks to our countrymen in England in an unknown tongue." This is a kind of "rogue patriotism" as Sinha commented and lamented that "Indian India remained on the other side of the view."<sup>11</sup> (3) *Rationalisation and self-laudation in early British Indian Historiography*, Narendra Krishna drew a distinction between pre-'Mutiny' British writings and the post 'Mutiny' ones and observed: "This atmosphere of British historical scholarship changed after the 'Mutiny' which was regarded by many Englishmen as a reconquest of India. New trends appeared. The most conspicuous trend was the spirit of vehement self-laudation."<sup>12</sup> The objective of later British writings, according to him, was to prove the excellence and wisdom of British administrative machinery and the personnel. It was simply the story of the success and benefits of the British rule in India.<sup>13</sup> Even in the twenties of the present century one could hear the drum-beating of British imperialism in the contemporary works the epitome of which, according to Dr. N. K. Sinha, was the 'Rulers of India Series.'<sup>14</sup>

Narendra Krishna stood for shaking off the distorted British legacy in Indian historical writings, but he was not anti-British as such. It is clear that he learnt much from and was inspired by British historical scholarship and excellence. He had, no doubt, a deep love for India

10 See N. K. Sinha's paper *The Teaching of History with Special Reference to the needs of the Country* in the 'Seminar on the Teaching of Social Sciences' held at Calcutta in December 1965.

11 See N. K. Sinha's paper *British Historians of India* in the Report of 'The Seminar on The Writing of Indian History: Retrospect and Prospect,' Visva-Bharati, 1966.

12 *Ibid.*

13 *Itihas* (Bengali), Vol. I (New Series), No. 1 of 1973 B. S.

14 *Ibid.*



and things Indian; yet he was not a nationalist in the narrow and aggressive sense of the term. To him nationalism and the idolatry of the nation are not synonymous. He was not pampering the lapses in Indian historical past and never sought for any whitewashing to make things pretty in the eyes of foreigners. To him historical reality must stand out and reveal itself as it was. It is also striking that in his eagerness to present 'Indian India', Sinha never discarded British documents as sham. Rather, he showed the way how Indian history should be approached even through British records. He always searched for the inner voice of those mute spectators of history. In his new quest Sinha was the first scholar to carefully study the Calcutta High Court records which certainly went beyond the British official mind and prejudice.

Dr. N. K. Sinha's methodology was somewhat rugged but solid and practical. He did not care much for the finer points of method; and this is why we may have a feeling that his was a pedestrian type. He himself admitted: "I must say that my methodology is personal, home made. It may be frail in the light of recent bright ideas and technical advance of more formidable disciplines or would-be disciplines. But I think that one need not necessarily seek the security of methodological shelter or advance along ideological tram lines."<sup>15</sup> There must not be any devaluation of common sense. It is not correct that he was not aware of the finer points of historical methodology which modern technique-conscious scholars emphasise. To him building up the fact base of his study — the *terra firma* of any historical writing — was more important than mere theorisation or inflict sophisticated questions on a none-too stable structure. He aptly observed: "The recent tendency towards oversophistication reveals an inclination to conceptualise the event before having studied it."<sup>16</sup> It is true that the conservative or fundamentalist type of method is fast going out of fashion as scholars are leaning more towards interpretation of facts than their full scale exploration. But Sinha remained unchanged and held on to his main stay.

N. K. Sinha's unrelenting quest for a practical, 'home made' method was writ large on his economic histories. He had strong held

<sup>15</sup> *Bengal Past and Present*, Vol. 92, 1973; see his article 'Indian Historical Records'.

<sup>16</sup> Benares Presidential Address.



views and remained uncompromising till his end on this score. Economic history is an area where an inter-disciplinary approach may be profitable. He was not averse to this approach, but he was cautious as well as jealous about maintaining the purity of the history discipline. He said: "We can beg, borrow or steal terms and concepts from other disciplines. But we must not go beyond that and dehumanise this subject in our effort to appreciate prestigious symbols... We should not be estranged from historical reality and we should try as far as possible to recover the old milieu of the past."<sup>17</sup> This attitude of Sinha was particularly expressed in his *Economic History of Bengal*. In the 'Preface' to Vol. I he had no hesitation to declare: "I have been unconstrained by doctrines and I have sought to form some idea of the human realities behind formalised written documents." Again in the 'Preface' to Vol. III he made it clear: "This history lacks the basis of theory or counterfactual conditional analysis. Such refinements do not suit an author who regards economic history in less complex terms." In fact Sinha did not believe that economic theories and aids do necessarily help understand a problem in its real perspective. "I feel that computers and mechanical aid," he said, "cannot bring objectivity to the study of history though they enable us to attain precision in some branches of historical investigation. Economic terms and concepts should be well understood by the economic historian but this should not bring jargonistic verbosity in history writing."<sup>18</sup> He further revealed: "When I talk with friends who are economists I find that they put questions to the material which the material does not answer. History should receive its vocabulary for the most part from the subject matter."<sup>19</sup> Sinha strongly believed that history must have its lay appeal and the historian cannot afford to become 'exclusively professional' like the economist.<sup>20</sup> He had no quarrel with the economists, but he was certainly not ready to dehumanise history by resorting to theorisation or model building as is often done in recent years<sup>21</sup> for prestigious, sophisticated studies. Unfortunately, Sinha could not prevent the drift, in the sixties and the seventies, of economic history going more towards

17 'Seminar on the Teaching of Social Sciences', *op.cit.*

18 Benares Presidential Address.

19 *Ibid.*

20 *Ibid.*

21 The present writer did his research on economic history under the supervision of Dr. N.K. Sinha and can vouchsafe that Sinha cautioned him, "Don't read abstract economics; don't get misled in the jungle of theories."



the domain of economics even in our country. But he remained nonchalant and stood as an unconvinced sentinel on the door step of history.

#### IV

A perusal of the works of Dr. N. K. Sinha will bring out two Sinhas so to say: one who deals with political history and biographical studies, is clear, readable and lucid. Many of such works are delightful reading. But the other Sinha of economic history is stronger and more firm in his boots, but a little cumbrous, halting and difficult. Particularly in the later period of his life, he developed so much of passion for records or historical documents that he stayed at a distance in respect of the readers of his economic history works. He ransacked the archives and different repositories and built up a massive fact base. But in the process he was himself overpowered by the records. Nevertheless, his total command over his source materials is proverbial, and compensates the weakness in his style and presentation of economic history. He was absolutely thorough and painstaking, and instilled these two qualities in those who carried on research under his guidance. In fact, Sinha earned a greater reputation as a research organiser and supervisor. He was a hard task master and a little fastidious. It was really difficult for his research scholars to satisfy him. He himself worked very hard and expected that others would never slacken in academics. He wrote: "No typist gave me any relief from copying records until very late in my career. No research assistant was called upon at any stage to assist me. I am incapable of trusting any other person to do my work for me. The process of digging was itself an illumination."<sup>22</sup> The scholar extraordinary became manifest in this statement. He was also opposed to any shortcut method of research by his scholars and urged them to avoid such practices.<sup>23</sup>

A man of strong likings and dislikings N. K. Sinha was not double-faced. He could say very harsh words on the face of any

<sup>22</sup> Quoted in *Bengal Past and Present*, Jan-June, 1976.

<sup>23</sup> Sinha told the present writer when he started working for the doctorate in 1958, "Don't consult any index. You must go through the pages of the documents yourself and you will profit in the long run." He always advised research scholars to live with their materials.



person if he did something that Sinha did not like. He was merciless in exposing the academic weakness in others, but in the world of genuine scholarship he always maintained humility. He did not even spare himself and expressed his own incapacity or shortcoming when he felt so in any academic exercise. Thus we find him admitting in the 'Preface' of the second edition of *Ranjit Singh*: "As my ideas about research developed, I became almost ashamed of my hasty first publication." When he was entrusted with the task of writing the biography of Sir Asutosh, he was hesitant and wrote in the 'Preface': "I had my doubts about my competence" and also reiterated that he "could not possibly be an ideal biographer of Austosh Mookerjee." This is definitely a rare quality in a person of his stature. The fundamental fact about Narendra Krishna Sinha was that he knew full well what he was talking about and this confidence as well as honesty provided that element of strength in him. A historian excels in the legacy he leaves behind. The trail that Sinha left behind in the field of economic history is still blazing brightly to show new light to generations of researchers in their quest for the unknown.



## **Sudhakar Chattopadhyaya: His Contribution to Ancient Indian Historiography (1911 – 1978)**

BY

AJOY K. LAHIRI

### **I**

The sudden death of Professor Chattopadhyaya in February, 1978, at the age of 67, deprived Indology of one of its ablest exponents. His first published work was in 1950, and from then on some fifteen books poured from his pen until his death. A number of his works will remain standard texts, and his writings will continue to have a great influence on Indology. Despite the fact that he was a lone thinker and fighter from the seclusion of Visva-Bharati, this "Gentle Colossus" of Indology, I believe, carved for himself a prominent niche in the domain of Indian historiography.

Since Professor Chattopadhyaya's colleagues at Visva-Bharati have not yet published a Festschrift for him, this study may be regarded as a tribute to the scholar and his work.

Chattopadhyaya was born in Simla on the 8th May, 1911. He received his primary education in Simla. After his matriculation from the Padmapukur Institution in 1927, he did his I. A. and B. A. from Presidency College, Calcutta. He gained his M. A. in General History from Calcutta University in 1933 and the B. L. in 1934. He also studied Sanskrit from Calcutta. He finished his P. R. S. in 1943, and was awarded the highest academic degree of Calcutta University, Doctor of Philosophy, in 1947.

Chattopadhyaya started his teaching career in Calcutta University in 1939. He became the Professor and Head of the Department of Ancient Indian History and Culture of Visva-Bharati in 1953, and retired from that post in 1974. He was the Principal of Vidya-Bhavana,



the post-graduate section in Humanities, from 1971-72. On his retirement in 1974, he continued to undertake research under a scheme initiated by the University Grants Commission entitled "Utilization of Outstanding Retired Teachers", though he could not finish it because of his death on 5th February, 1978.

The major influence in Chattopadhyaya's life was exerted by that doyen of Indologists, Hemchandra Raychaudhuri, of Calcutta. Another eminent scholar of the University, who went on to be the Vice-Chancellor of Visva-Bharati, Probod Chandra Bagchi, was his latter mentor. As an outstanding teacher and scholar, Chattopadhyaya was greatly honoured by various institutions abroad. He attended an International Conference on the Kuṣāṇas at Dushanbe, U.S.S.R., in 1968, on a personal invitation from Moscow. He also attended the 28th World Orientalist Congress at Canberra, Australia, in 1971, again on a personal invitation from the organizers of the Congress.

At home, Chattopadhyaya was the recipient of many honours. He was the president of the Indian History Congress, Section 1, (Ancient Indian History), in Ranchi, 1964. He was a member of the Advisory Board of the Archaeological Department, Government of West Bengal, from 1969-71. He was the only Senior Professor in the Faculty of Humanities at Visva-Bharati from 1971 until his retirement in 1974.

The main purpose of this study is to assess Chattopadhyaya's contributions to Indian history and culture, concentrating on certain aspects of his historical thinking, leaving a detailed and systematic exposition for later historians to develop.

Chattopadhyaya's contributions as a (a) political historian of ancient India, (b) historian of Indian religions and (c) of Indian society will be our main concern.

## II

Chattopadhyaya entered the intellectual world with the publication of his first book, *The Achaemenids in India* (*The Achaemenids and India, in the revised edition*), in 1950. The conquest of some parts of north-western India by the Achaemenids and the relation between ancient



India and Iran are dealt with on the basis of the latest evidence available at the time. The author has delved very deep into the classical sources, old Persian inscriptions, and the Indian sources bearing on the topic. Starting from the time of Cyrus, the Persians were casting their covetous glance over this part of India. Darius' list of 25 countries in the Behistun inscription contains the names of two Indian principalities, Gandhāra and Sattygydia, which came under the subjection of the Persians. The author finds it difficult to determine the exact territorial limit of the Persian occupation. It is also uncertain how long these territories were under their domination though the author refers to the significant pointer that during Alexander's invasion of north-west India no Persian official was found south of the Hindukush.

The author discusses with refreshing details India's relation with Central Asia through the passes of the mountain ranges in the north-west. He also contends that the Achaemenids had the distinction of acquainting India with the outside world, especially the nomadic tribal people of Central Asia, who poured into the fertile plains of north India in the subsequent ages. The influence of the Achaeminids on later Indian culture is also dealt with by the author.

Chattopadhyaya's next publication, *The Śakas in India*, deals with the history of the Śakas, a nomadic tribe of Central Asia, who proved politically a great success. The Kuṣāṇas might have had a more extensive territory under their control, but it did not last long, while the Śakas continued to rule over Indian principalities for a much longer time. They also penetrated south of the Vindhya, conquered portions of the Maharashtra region, and even founded colonies in the far south of India. The vigour of the Śakas was obvious from the fact that they withstood the Sassanid invasion and revived in subsequent years.

The Śakas were an Indo-Iranian people of the Scythian stock. They were divided into Śaka tigrakhauda ("the Śakas with pointed caps"), Śaka haumavarka ("the Śakas who are preparers of Soma"), and Śaka taradraya ("the Śakas beyond the sea"). They lived in the inhospitable region between the Oxus valley and the Pamir plateau. The Fertile plains of north India naturally attracted their attention. Their migration started about 165 B. C., when the Hiung-nus pushed the Yueh-chis westward. The Yueh-chis, in their turn, fell upon the Śakas and dislodged them from their homeland. The Śakas entered India, carved out independent principalities for themselves and, in course of time, they were absorbed by the existing inhabitants of the subcontinent.



The author enters into intricate details regarding the origin and growth of Śaka principalities in different parts of India. He starts with the early Śaka settlements in north India during the time of Patañjali (150 B. C.). This is followed by chapters on the Muruṇḍas, the House of Maues of Taxila, the Śakas of Mathura, the Kṣaharātas of west India, the dynasty of Caṣṭana, and the dynasty of Māhiṣmatī. The author enters into minute details regarding the chronology of these dynasties, the extent of their kingdoms, and their gradual decline. The disappearance of the Śaka rule is deftly dealt with in chapter eight. On numismatic evidence, he contends that the Sātavāhana ruler, Yajñaśrī Śātakarṇi, snatched away a part of the Śaka territory from the later Kṣaharātas. He rejects the view that the emergence of the Vākātakas and Traikutakas brought about the downfall of the Śakas. He contends that the absence of any Śaka Mahākṣatrapa in west India from 295 A. D. was due to the Sassanid invasion of India. However, it was the Gupta ruler, Candragupta II, who delivered the *coup de grace* to the Śaka rule in west India.

From the above brief sketch of the Śakas in India it is obvious that the author adroitly deals with an obscure chapter of ancient Indian history. He quotes the views of earlier scholars, rejects them when he finds them contradicted by epigraphic, numismatic or literary evidence, or, he sometimes upholds them with additional materials culled from various sources. The author's formidable stature, as a historian of ancient India is obvious from his thorough mastery of the original sources, both Indian and foreign.

The Śakas, before they entered India, were influenced by the Irano-Parthian culture, while in India, they accepted Indo-Hellenic culture. The author thinks that they played the part of culture-brokers for they were instrumental in bringing the various cultures to bear upon each other.

The assimilation of the Śakas with the Indian people is dealt with in a refreshingly original chapter entitled "The Indianisation of the Sakas" (Appendix I). The author shows that the process of assimilation was slow and gradual. The initial reaction of the orthodox Indians regarding the "barbarians" was one of hostility and repugnance. Indian authorities portray them as greedy, wicked, sinful and their customs as immoral, especially their sexual mores as lax even by Vātsyāyana. Later on, however, they accepted Indian customs, especially, the caste system, which must have facilitated their assimilation with the Indian people.



The four-fold caste system of Hindu India exactly corresponded to the Śaka system of social stratification according to which the Magas, the Māgadhas, the Mānasas and the Mandagas were the Brahmins, the Kṣatriyas, the Vaiśyas and the Śūdras, respectively of the Śaka community. The Magas, in course of time, came to be regarded as the best of the Brahmanical stock in orthodox society, because they followed the practices enjoined by the Brahmanical Dharmasāstra writers. Later on, with changed socio-economic conditions, they followed professions which were abhorrent to the earlier law-givers.

The history of the Śaka Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas, and Śūdras is obscure. In this connection, the author refers to Śaka Kṣatriya rulers and Śaka-Indian inter-racial marriages. He contends that the custom of cross-cousin marriage in some parts of south India was introduced by the Maga Brahmins. Interestingly enough, two customs sanctioned by Indian authorities, women's free choice of their husbands and polygamy, were accepted by the Śakas, which helped the process of assimilation of the Śakas into Indian society. This is obvious from the fact that, while Patañjali refers to the Śakas as touchable Śūdras, Manu describes them as degraded Kṣatriyas.

The author also points out that the adoption of Indian religions by the Śakas helped their assimilation. Buddhism and Jainism flourished under the Śakas, especially, in the Mathura region. The satraps of Taxila and Manikiala were adherents of the Buddhist faith. The cult of the Nāgas was also popular in the Mathura region. The Śaka rulers were catholic enough to subscribe to more than one faith. Among other religious activities, the author notes the gifts of the Śaka rulers to the deities of the Brahmanical pantheon, and the Brahmins, dedication of caves to, and, endowments of money for, Buddhist monks, visits to the sacred places of Hinduism, and the worship of deities, like Śiva, Pārvatī, Kārtikeya, etc.

The age of the Śakas witnessed great expansion of India's trade with Central Asia and China, though its influence on the Śakas is difficult to determine. Indian culture, especially, Buddhism, reached Khotan, Kashgar, Niya and Leou-lan. These Indian colonies formed the link in the trade relation between ancient India and China. In all probability the Śakas controlled two important trade routes of north India, one running from Pāṭaliputra to Barygaza or Broach, and the other running from Pāṭaliputra to Gandhāra through the Multan and Jharvar regions. Trade from south India passed through Nahapāna's realm, though commercial activities in the north were in a more flourishing



condition than in the south because of the greater difficulty of transport in the latter region.

The author contends that India's trade with the western world during the Scythian period was in a flourishing condition on the basis of the evidence of Ptolemy, Pliny, the Periplus of the Erythrean Sea and others. The spread of India's maritime activities to Suvarṇadvīpa (Sumatra) and Yavabhūmi (Java) also probably began during this age. Such flourishing trade conditions involved adequate banking facilities which were provided by guild organizations.

Chattopadhyaya's next major publication on the political history of ancient India, *Early History of North India: c. 200 B. C. – 650 A.D.*, came out in 1958, and was soon regarded as an authoritative study. For the present writer, this book is the scholar's *magnum opus*, and the most scholarly and comprehensive book on ancient Indian political history since the publication of Raychaudhuri's *Political History of Ancient India* in 1918.

This book is a study of the political history of ancient India from the downfall of the Mauryas to the death of Harṣa. It deals with the history of the Bactrian Greeks, Śuṅgas, Śakas, Parthians, Kuṣāṇas, Guptas, Maukharis, and the time of Harṣa. The consummate skill of the author is obvious from his punctilious study of the foreign sources, Chinese and others, pertaining to the period. He deals with the history of the period in nine chapters. In addition, the book contains appendices, genealogical tables and a bibliography which make the work invaluable.

Chattopadhyaya starts with a discussion of the career of Puṣyamitra. He was a contemporary of the Bactrian Greek leader Demetrius I who invaded Pāṭaliputra in 188–87 B.C. About his anti-Buddhist activities, the author holds that the Bharhut and Sanchi monuments were built after his death. His death (c. 151 B.C.) led to a welter of confusion which witnessed the emergence of many small kingdoms and republics as also the establishment of Greek kingdoms in north-west India. Around this time the country also fell prey to a series of invasions from Central Asia. In course of time, these people settled down in India. The immigration of Scythians (Śakas) was placed at the close of the first century B. C. The date of Maues is fixed at c. 20 B.C. – 20 A. D. Interestingly enough, the author dates the Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions in the Vikrama era. He places the Hathigumpha inscription of Khāravela at the beginning of the first century A. D. He adheres to the strongly-held tradition that the Greek king, Menander, embraced



Buddhism. He also holds the view that Gondophernes became a king in 19 A. D. in Iran, and, later on conquered parts of north-west India.

Chattopadhyaya deals with the history of the Kuṣāṇas in the fourth chapter. He persuasively argues that Kaṇiṣka ascended the throne in 78 A. D., which also marked the beginning of the Śaka era. He might have started his career as a vice-regent of Vima Kadphises and reconquered the Taxila region in 78 - 79 A. D. The author does not believe that Kuṣāṇas extended their sway over Bihar and Bengal. Of the Western Kṣatrapas, the author enters into a detailed discussion of the date of Nahapāṇa, and concludes that his inscriptions are dated in his regnal year, and that he ruled some time between 60 and 80 A. D.

The so called dark period of ancient India, between the decline of the Kuṣāṇas and the emergence of the Guptas in eastern India engages the author's attention in chapter six. He lucidly deals with the history of the Kauśāmbī region, the Muṛuṇḍas, the Nāgas, and the republican tribes like the Yaudheyas and Ārjunāyanas.

Coming to the Guptas, the author holds that they came to power in the Magadha region after ousting the Śaka Muṛuṇḍas. He also holds that the original Gupta territory included Magadha and the region along the Ganges river up to northern West Bengal. Kumāradevi was not a Licchavi princess, but a Licchavi by nationality, and Samudra Gupta was indebted to the Licchavi people and not to their royal dynasty for some of his territorial conquests. The author believes that Samudra Gupta's extensive campaigns in south India led to the loss of some of his territorial gains in north India. In order to regain these territories, he had to undertake a second series of campaign in north India. The east Malwa region was conquered by Candragupta II before 401 A. D. Bhāsa was an elder contemporary of the King, while Kālidāsa was a later contemporary of the same king. It is not unlikely that the Mandasore region became independent under the leadership of Govinda Gupta, who was a brother of the contemporary Gupta king, Kumara Gupta I. He makes a distinction between the Mlecchas and the Hūṇas both of whom were defeated by Skandagupta. The former were a batch of Greco-Persians. The author adroitly deals with the vexed problem of succession after Skandagupta. He shows that Mihirakula was defeated by Yaśodharman in Kashmir after the former's defeat by Bālāditya. The last two chapters deal with the Maukharis and the age of Harṣavardhana.



Chattopadhyaya broke new ground by his next publication, *Early Dynasties of South India*, in 1974. In the introductory chapter he deals with the economic factors which shaped south Indian history. The average soil of peninsular India is not fertile, although it is good for growing cotton. The necessity of making the land cultivable has made the people work hard. In such a condition tribal chiefs had enormous power and enjoyed local autonomy. The movement of people from the north carried north Indian culture to the south. This gradually led to the formation of a composite culture south of the Vindhya. The author then deals with the accounts of south India in the writings of the classical authors. It is significant that the people of Peninsular India maintained maritime relations with China, South East Asia, Africa and the Roman Empire, though inland trade was hampered due to the paucity of good roads.

The Dravidian-speaking south Indians belong to the Mediterranean ethnic stock. They were the creators of the Harappa culture. They migrated to the south under the pressure of the Aryans in the north. They maintained their separate existence well into the historical period. It was Mahāpadma who extended his sway up to the river Godavari. Chandragupta Maurya intervened militarily on behalf of Kōśars and defeated the king of Mohūr. Aśoka conquered Kalinga but he allowed considerable autonomy to the local chiefs in various parts of South India.

Chattopadhyaya's primary concern in the book is to trace the history of the Sātavāhanas and the Vākātakas of south India. On the original home of the former, he comes to the conclusion that there is no genuine evidence to prove conclusively that Andhra-deśa was the original home of the independent Sātavāhanas. They migrated from the Andhra area to Mahārāṣṭra which was their adopted home. They came to power in the third century B.C., but lost their independence, and there were thirty kings in the family. As regards their caste affiliation, the author notes that even in the ninth century A.D., they were not given a high status by the orthodox Hindu lawgivers.

The earliest member of the dynasty, Sātavāhana, probably came to power in the Upper Deccan on the tragic death of the last Suṅga king, Devabhūti, in c. 75 B. C. He subsequently lost his independent status and it was Simuka who regained the independent status of the dynasty. The third ruler, Śātakarṇi, successfully resisted the advance of the Kalinga king, Khāravela, who was celebrated by the performance of a horse sacrifice. An important document of the history of this period



is the Nanaghat inscription of his queen, Nāganikā. It attests to the prevalence of the various Brahmanical cults in Śātakarṇi's realm.

By the middle of the first century A. D. Sātavāhana power declined due to the Scythian inroads. Probably the successors of Āpilaka lost western Mahārāṣṭra to the Scythian Kṣahrātas. It was Gautamīputra who restored the lost glory of the dynasty by uprooting the Kṣaharāta ruler, Nahapāna in c. 117 A. D. He was succeeded by Pulumāyī who lost the northern and south-western part of his dominion to the Scythians. A later ruler, Yajñaśrī Śātakarṇi, defeated the Śakas of Ujjayini, who had to acknowledge the suzerainty of the former. The Sātavāhana dynasty came to an end after the reign of Pulumāyī II. On the ruins of the dynasty emerged the Ābhīras, Cuṭus, Ikṣvākus, Pallavas, and lastly, the Vākātakas. After dealing with the history of the above four minor dynasties, the author passes on to a detailed discussion of the Vākāṭaka rule.

On the origin of the Vākātakas, it is maintained that they were of south Indian origin and their original habitat was the Vidarbha country. Then follows a methodical and painstaking analysis of the genealogy and chronology of the dynasty. Vindhyaśakti I, who was the founder of the dynasty, was followed by Pravarasena I (265 – 325 A. D.) who was the first independent ruler of the dynasty. The legitimacy of the rule of the third ruler, Prthivīsenā (340 – 355 A. D.), was challenged by his cousin, Rudrasena I (340 – 355 A. D.), which led to a civil war. The former retired to the Basim region where he founded a new kingdom. The latter was helped by his maternal grandfather's family, the Bhāraśivas, which enabled him to seize the Vākāṭaka throne. This alliance, between the two families had important implications for the expanding Gupta empire in north India. Samudra Gupta, the contemporary Gupta ruler, conquered the "forest country" around the Jabalpur region, and made the Narmada river the southern boundary of the Gupta realm. This, according to the author, checked the northward expansion of the Vākātakas.

Rudrasena's successor, Prthivīsenā I (365 – 390 A. D.), conquered the Bundelkhand region from the Gupta ruler Candragupta II. The latter reconquered the region subsequently. The trial of strength between the two dynasties came to an end with the marriage of Prthivīsenā's son, Rudrasena II, with Prabhāvathī Guptā, the daughter of Candragupta II. This matrimonial alliance was of great significance for Indian history. Candragupta II exerted great influence on the Vākāṭaka realm.



through his daughter, who acted as regent for her minor son, Divākara-sena, on the premature death of her husband. Having thus made his rear secure, Candragupta II undertook a series of campaigns against the Śakas of west India. After defeating them he assumed the titles of Śakāri and Vikramāditya.

During Divākara-sena's rule, or after his death, there was a partition of the Vākāṭaka realm. About 445 A. D. Prabhakara-sena II became king. His accession was challenged by his brother Dāmodara-sena. Moreover, the warlike activities of the Puṣyamitras in the north-western areas of the realm led to great uncertainties. In this situation Prabhakara-sena II had to appoint military governors to maintain security in his realm.

The death of Prabhakara-sena II in 475 A.D. was followed by bitter rivalry between his house and that of Vatsagulma. No records of the Vākāṭakas are forthcoming after Prithvisena (500 – 525 A. D.) of the main house, and Harisena (480 – 505 A. D.) of the Vatsagulma house. This shows that their dominance of south India came to an end about the beginning of the sixth century A. D. On its ruins rose the dynasty of Mānāṅka of the Bhoja stock in the western coastal region, the Somavaṃśis in the north-east, and the Kalacuris in the north. In the last two appendices, the author deals with the history of the far south, the Muḍānandas and the Cuṭus.

Chattopadhyaya returned to north Indian history with the publication of his book on political history, *Bimbisāra to Aśoka* in 1977. It deals with the history of the pre-Mauryan and Mauryan dynasties of Magadha. On the tragic death of Bimbisāra, his wife, Kośaladevī, died of grief, and Ajātaśatru became the king. The village of Kāśī, which was given to the former king as a dowry of his marriage with the Kosalan princess, was taken away from the new king by the contemporary Kosalan king, Prasenajit. In the ensuing battle, Ajātaśatru was defeated but the Kosalan king, despite being victorious, entered into a peace treaty with the former, and gave his own daughter in marriage to him. This was taken as a failure on the part of the Kosalan king, which occasioned a palace revolt and the crown prince usurped the throne. The deposed king sought shelter in Rājagṛha, the capital city of Ajātaśatru, but died of exposure on the outskirts of the city. Ajātaśatru also came to loggerheads with the Vajjis on the problem of the control of the river Ganges which was one of the main arteries of trade in north India. With almost Machiavellian tactics, he was able to sow



seeds of dissension among the Vajjians and thereby destroying their unity and ultimately defeating them. He also undertook additional fortifications of the capital city, Rājagṛha, to prevent an attack from the Avanti king. He married his daughter, Padmāvati, to king Udayana of Vatsa so that he might not ally himself with the king of Avanti. The next king, Udayabhadda, built a new capital at Kusumapura (Pāṭaliputra) on the banks of the Ganges. The hostility between Magadha and Avanti continued during his reign. It is not unlikely that he was killed by a hired assassin in about 446 B.C. The history of the last three Haryanka rulers is obscure. They seemed to have been parricides. Hence, the last ruler, Nāgadāsaka, was deposed by the people who appointed one of the ministers, Śiśunāga, the king about 414 B.C. He defeated the last Avanti ruler and annexed his kingdom. He transferred his capital from Pāṭaliputra to Rājagṛha, and, later on, to Vaiśālī. The rule of this dynasty came to an end about 346 B.C.

The next ruler, Mahāpadma Nanda, the founder of the Nanda dynasty, was a great conqueror. He was the first Magadhan ruler to conquer the Aśmaka region in the trans-Vindhyan area. He also ruled Kāliṅga and a portion of the Telegu-speaking area. His territory extended up to the river Beas in east Punjab. His successor was Sumālya or Sukalpa identical with Agrammes or Xandrames mentioned in the writings of the classical authors. The enormous wealth of the Nandas was due as much to heavy taxation as to flourishing trade with the regions beyond the Himalayas. The rule of the Śūdra Nandas was brought to an end by Chandragupta who belonged to the Moriya Kṣatriya clan of Pippalivana. He engineered a popular revolt against the Nandas with the help of the Himalayan king Parvataka and the members of his own tribe, though his request for help to Alexander, the Greek invader, was refused by the latter. Chandragupta inaugurated the rule of the Maurya dynasty in 324 B.C.

The conflict between Chandragupta and Seleucus, who inherited Alexander's conquests in north-west India, has given rise to great controversies among historians. After an exhaustive analysis of the extant sources, Chattopadhyaya comes to the conclusion that the conflict ended in a defeat for Seleucus who ceded much of Ariana lying to the west of Hydaspes, and contracted a marriage alliance with the Mauryan king, in return for five hundred elephants. Their subsequent relation was very cordial. The Indian king sent Seleucus a few Indian drugs, while the latter sent Megasthenes as the Greek ambassador to the court of the Indian king.



Chandragupta's sway extended over Avanti, Surāṣṭra, and parts of South India. He came under the influence of the Jainas towards the end of his career, and repaired to Sravana Belgola in South India in company with the Jaina ascetic, Bhadrabāhu, leaving his son, Bindusāra, to tackle the problem of the great famine which was then ravaging the country.

Bindusāra tried to solve the problem by various means, as is proved by the Sohgaura Bronze Plaque and the Mahasthan Stone Plaque Inscriptions. According to the former, the Mahāmātra of the region ordered two barns to be built for the storage of grain for distribution during times of distress. The latter contains an order of another Mahāmātra to the state officials of Puṇḍravardhana to stock the store-house abundantly for the Saṃvaṅgiya people. There were sporadic uprisings in different parts of the realm due to famine but these were put down. He maintained cordial relations with the Greek kings of West Asia. He divided his kingdom into several administrative units with the royal princes as heads who were helped by the Mahāmātras. His ministerial Council, and the famous politician, Kauṭilya, continued to help him in the administration of the country. He was a tolerant ruler who supported the Brahmanical sects as also the Ājīvikas.

The next ruler, Aśoka, ascended the throne in 272 B.C., although his coronation took place in 268 B.C. He conquered Kalinga in 262 B.C. The massive casualties of the war left a deep impression on his mind. He gave up war as a method of state policy, and resorted to moral conquest. He became a Buddhist. His vast kingdom included a portion of Afghanistan in the north-west, the Nepal valley in the north and the Brahmaputra valley in the east, while in the south it included the areas beyond Madras.

Aśoka's personal religion was Buddhism, though he was tolerant of the ethical ideas common to various religions of his time. About this time Buddhism became the creed of an affluent merchant community and by espousing the cause of Buddhism, Aśoka supported the dominant class interest of the society. His religio-ethical reforms had two main aspects: first, he preached a set of ethical principles to be practised by his people, and, second, he devised another set of principles for reforming the Buddhist monastic organisation; for example, he strenuously tried to prevent schism. He also took steps to promote Buddhism in India and beyond.



Though himself a Buddhist, the dhamma he preached for his people was not doctrinal Buddhism, but a set of ethical principles common to all religious creeds. These principles could be put into actual practice by means of toleration, non-violence, righteous behaviour and benevolent activities. He himself practised these virtues and set an example to his subjects. His own religion, Buddhism did not prevent him from supporting the Brāhmaṇas, Ājīvikas and Jainas. His humanitarian activities in India and the neighbouring countries included medical treatment for men and animals, planting, or importing herbs beneficial to men and animals, digging wells and planting trees on the roads. He forbade the regular killing of many animals for the royal kitchen, as also social festivities where animal sacrifices were held, or which showed fights between animals and supported unsocial behaviour opposed to his ethical ideas. Shows which would arouse religious feelings among the masses took the place of such festivities. He also sent missionaries abroad to Egypt, Syria, Macedonia, Cyrene and Epirus — to preach the gospel of the dhamma. He overhauled the administration to prevent miscarriage of justice.

The last days of this great king ended in unhappiness. Because of his largesse to religious organisations, his ministers tightened their control over him so that the royal treasury might not be totally exhausted. He became almost powerless, dying in 232 B. C. after a reign of forty years.

Chattopadhyaya deals with the successors of Aśoka in Appendix E. Kuṇāla-Suśaṣas was his immediate successor. The partition of the realm started during the rule of his successors. After an exhaustive analysis of the extant sources, Puranic, Buddhist, Classical Greek, and Tibetan, the author comes to the conclusion that the kingdom, though partitioned, remained intact up to 206 B. C., when Antiochus, king of Syria, renewed the traditional Greek friendship with the Mauryas. The contemporary Maurya king was Sophagasenus (Śubhagasena). The dynasty collapsed about 187 B. C. The reasons for this debacle were mutual bickering and jealousy among the collateral Mauryan princes, divided armed forces and division within the country. Puṣyamitra, the commander-in-chief of the last Maurya ruler, Brāhadratha, effected a military coup, and inaugurated the Śuṅga rule in India.

In a chapter entitled Mauryan Polity, the author enters into a detailed discussion of the process of government and civil order in Mauryan India. He contends that the ideal of Cakravartihood, which entailed extension of sovereignty over the whole of India, was realized by



Aśoka for the first time in Indian history. His inscriptions inform us that there were autonomous tribal units in his kingdom. His attitude toward them and the states on the borders of his realm was characterized by benevolent paternalism, though he intervened in their internal affairs for enhancing their moral life. He did this, for example, in the north-western border regions of the country as is attested by his inscriptions in Afghanistan. His idea of kingship may be studied under two categories: firstly, in the newly-conquered territory of Kalinga, he emphasized his paternal attitude toward the people; secondly, while dealing with the tribal people he indicated his contractual obligation to them. According to the contractual arrangement, people used to enter into an agreement with the ruler who was expected to protect them in return for a share of paddy. His general concept of duty as a ruler is clear from an inscription in which he asks his officials to report directly to him irrespective of wherever he is. A network of spies was also a significant feature of the administrative machinery of the state.

The Mauryan rulers used to lead a life of pomp and grandeur. The administration of justice and conducting wars were their two important functions. They used to go on games of chase, although Aśoka ended this type of relaxation. A Council of Ministers used to help the rulers who had overriding power over its deliberations. Financial matters were under the jurisdiction of the central government. The country was divided into several provinces which were subdivided into smaller units for administrative convenience. The rulers could issue direct orders to the provincial officials. They and the state officials undertook state tours to familiarize themselves with people's affairs. After the king, and the royal princes, who used to head the provincial administration, came the Mahāmātras of various categories. Mention should also be made of other types of high officials, like the Prādesikas, Rājukas, Yuktas, and others. The main sources of state laws were Śruti, Smṛti, Sadācāra and the dictates of conscience, although a powerful ruler, like Aśoka, could go against custom. For example, he stopped pleasure tours for himself thereby contravening the prevailing custom of the day.

Chattopadhyaya's analysis of the Indian caste system in the account of Megasthenese, as preserved in the writings of later Greek authors, like Strabo and Arrian, is an interesting piece of historical criticism. Megasthenese divided the Indian people into seven castes: philosophers, husbandmen, herdsmen and hunters, traders, warriors,



overseers, and advisors of the king. The author remarks that Megasthenese had no real idea of the social divisions of India. He merely dealt with the professional and occupational divisions some of which might have important administrative functions. It is not unlikely, the author contends, that Megasthenese was familiar with seven-fold Egyptian social hierarchy as depicted in the writings of Herodotus, and thought that a similar system also prevailed in India. While dealing with the functions of the seven castes the author discusses the probability of the Mauryas maintaining a navy, and significantly remarks that the huge carnage at the time of the Kalinga war might have been due to the fact that the state was attacked by both the army and the navy. Of the two types of higher state officials mentioned by Megasthenese, the *agronomi* and *astynomi*, one managing rural and the other urban affairs, the author remarks that, in all probability, Megasthenese was more familiar with urban than rural matters. From his accounts of the road system in Mauryan India, the author concludes that Megasthenese had a better idea of the metropolitan area than that of the countryside. He rejects the view of Strabo that individual ownership of land did not prevail in Mauryan India, and that the King was the owner of all land. He thinks that the Greek writer confounded the Egyptian system with the Indian. Probably the king's great power to exact taxes from all sources reminded the Greek writer of the Egyptian Pharaoh's immense power, and this might have led to his erroneous view that the king was the sole owner of the soil.

The above contains, in the briefest possible outline, the primary concerns of Chattopadhyaya in the field of ancient Indian political history. He was an historian who drew considerable sustenance from the social sciences, but one must note that his abiding interest was in political history and his immense analytical aptitudes were those of a political historian. These abilities were formidable and they, no less than his extraordinary proficiencies in other areas of Indology, underlay his superb achievements as a political historian of ancient India. By way of concluding this section we may briefly note the skills and methodological approaches of the historian.

One of the major aspects of a scholar's historical works is his exhaustive analysis of original sources. Chattopadhyaya used source criticism to penetrate the veil of inscriptions, coins, legends and myths behind which the history of early India moved in barely recognizable form. In compiling political history of ancient India, the author considered not a few inscriptions or coins, but a whole host of them; he



analysed them and criticized them and then created his own imposing historical edifice. Thereby, he fulfilled one important criterion of writing history: "History is the measure of sound grain sifted by rigorous criticism from the straw and chaff of good, bad, and indifferent testimony." (A. Nevins, *Gateway to History*, p. 225)

The second important feature of his work is his penetrating analysis of the extant sources which provided him with a deep insight into the forces which made up the history of a particular period.

These two qualities, penetrating analysis and deep insight, are but two aspects of the thoroughness of Chattopadhyaya as an interpreter of ancient India. It is as a thorough and complete historian that he takes his honoured place in the historiography of ancient India.

Respectful criticism, but criticism nevertheless, also characterizes his writings on ancient India. As he himself succinctly puts it: "On many crucial points, I have ventured to differ from my *pūrva-sūris*, but I may humbly assure my readers that I have always been on the guard not to be led astray from the terra firma of solid facts by an eagerness for theorising." (*Early History of North India*, p. viii). This respectful and humble attitude, besides providing a model for younger historians, should be regarded as an essential part of the repertoire of an historian. In the language of P. Gay (*Style in History*, p. 62), this type of "self-imposed discipline alone brings excellence to all art, to the shaping of noble writing..."

Transparent honesty is another feature of Chattopadhyaya's writings. He realized that the historian has the duty to be accurate and honest to the best of his ability. He should be conscious of the fact that mere intention is no guarantee of achievement and that objectivity is an attitude of mind which he may consciously seek and yet unconsciously undermine. But if he is conscious of this possible pitfall within himself and tries to avert it at every turn, he is a true historian. Even by this exact standard, our historian may be regarded as the very model of the honest historians. The American historian, F. J. Turner, ("An American Definition of History," in *The Varieties of History*, ed. by F. Stern, p. 208) once enunciated an important principle of writing history in the following words: "Of one thing beware. Avoid as the very unpardonable sin any one-sidedness, any partisan, any partial treatment of history." Judged by this standard, Chattopadhyaya can be described as an impartial and objective historian.



The next section will deal with the contributions of the scholar in the field of Indian religions.

Chattopadhyaya's major overview and appraisal of Indian culture came in 1961 with the publication of his book, *Traditional Values in Indian Life*. It was published under the UNESCO Major Project on 'the Mutual Appreciation of Eastern and Western Cultural Values.' Though it deals with the traditional values in various spheres, like the socio-economic, religious, political, artistic, etc., I have decided to include it within the category of his contribution to Indian religion in view of the fact that these values are greatly permeated with religious assumptions. This underpinning of religious values in all spheres of India's national life is one of the distinguishing features of the total national ethos throughout the country's recorded history.

Among the various strata of the Indian people, which significantly contributed to the efflorescence of the country's traditional values, the author mentions the Negroids, the Proto-Austroloids, the Dravidians, the Aryans and Proto-Mongoloids. Despite the great heterogeneity of the people, the country was conceived of as one unit. By giving even the foreigners a status in the caste system, ancient India brought about a sense of fundamental unity among her people. In course of time, the Aryan value system set the pattern for other groups. The main sources of the system were the Vedas, the Āraṇyakas and Upaniṣads, the Śrauta and Grihya Sūtras, the Dharma Śāstras, the Epics, the Purāṇas and the Āgamas. The first value inculcated by this extensive literature is that of Dharma or natural justice. It acknowledges that there is a basic law of the universe to which human beings ought to conform. It recognises individualism provided the ethical and spiritual norms are not transgressed. This recognition of individualism resulted in the ancient period in a wide tolerance of beliefs, and a non-violent attitude toward life since the totality of life is governed by Dharma. The second value is of Artha or material welfare. As God permeates this world, including worldly objects, one should not give them up totally. The third value is that of Kāma or creative desire, which should be governed by the principle of Dharma. The ultimate aim is Mokṣha or liberation, which leads a person beyond the cycle of transmigration. While within this cycle, a man's life is determined by his karma or actions in another life which must be recompensed. In order to achieve these four aims, ancient India developed a spirit of unity in diversity which led to the assimilation of non-Aryan values with the Aryan ones. During the Muslim period there was mutual give and take between the Hindus and



Muslims. They took interest in each other's religion and culture. The Muslims have left their lasting impression on Indian music, cooking, festivals and fairs, etc. With the coming of the Europeans, Indians absorbed western values like political freedom, democracy, nationalism and the rule of law. Thus, despite their conservatism, Indians were capable of learning from others. Their value system is still evolving in keeping with the trends of the modern world.

The two linchpins of the Indian social system, the caste structure and the joint family system, have existed for centuries. The former is designated by two terms, *varṇa* and *jāti*. According to the *varṇa* system, the society was divided into Brāhmaṇas, Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas and Sūdras. It permitted a man to proceed from one class to another with the change of his character and disposition. Under the working of this system, the Greeks, the Scythians, the Kuṣāṇas came ultimately to be regarded as Kṣatriyas despite their foreign extraction. Side by side with this liberal system, the liberal *jāti* system also operated, which made the social hierarchy stagnant. Under the latter, professional groups became hereditary and differentiated from one another by their origin and sacraments, and this, in course of time, gave rise to sub-castes. As some of the professions followed by the Vaiśyas and Sūdras came to be looked down upon by the upper classes, people following those professions were despised and this was responsible for the obnoxious system of untouchability. However, by the side of the *jāti* view of the social hierarchy the *varṇa* system also worked, for outcaste holy men have also been found in Indian society. The principle of endogamy, which determined marital relations, did not prevent at least the ruling class from contracting such relationships with foreigners. The basic principles governing the caste system were as follows: a man's position in society is determined by his actions, including actions, in the past life. Each human unit should do what has been assigned to it. Despite the natural differences between human beings, they should accept a common belief pattern for social harmony. A well-ordered economic life could avoid unfair competition. While diversity is inevitable, unity should be encouraged.

The joint family system included several generations living under one roof. It worked on the principle that the family is the bearer of tradition and should enforce discipline. It seeks to lessen the severity of private property in preventing fragmentation of lands. It provides security against unemployment and old age. Together with the above



two systems, the four stages of life, namely, those of celibacy, a householder, retired life and renunciation, provided a complete scheme of life for a man.

Education used to be given in the homes of the teachers. The prescribed course of study centred around religion. At the end of the period of study a candidate had to satisfy an Assembly of Elders before a certificate was issued. A teacher used to regard his wards as his sons. The system of education was restricted to the elite only. However, in Buddhist institutions there was no such restriction. They used popular languages in education and thereby helped the spread of education. The Buddhist Vihāras used to house a large number of teachers, and thus the students had a variety of choice of study. They were financed by public donations and the education given by them was liberal. Under the aegis of Buddhism several universities were founded, for example, the one at Nālandā flourished from the fifth to the thirteenth century. Yuan Chwang has left a glorious account of it for posterity. According to the Tibetan sources it had a huge library.

The ideals of ancient Indian education were based on the stipulation that it should be free, and that educational institutions should be residential where the intimate contact of the students with the teachers would be helpful for character formation and leading a disciplined life for the former. They would also develop a sense of belonging to a community and realize the importance of celibacy at this stage of life. The teachers should have an ideal character infusing the idea of Dharma in their students. The food catered for the students should be of a type which would help them develop a pure character.

At the end of the period of education, a student used to enter the stage of a householder. Looking after his material welfare and fulfilment of his creative desire were his two main aims in life. He had to consider the changing economic life of the country. With the gradual expansion of Aryan culture the earlier rural economy of the country changed giving rise to urban economy, commercial relation with various areas of Asia, Africa and Europe, the growth of influential guild organizations and the use of metal currencies. Internal trade was also developing with the growth of several trade routes. From Pāṭaliputra three routes ran to the frontiers of the country. The first ran to Bactria, the second to Barygaza (Breach) and the third to Nepal. By the first century A. D. India had brisk trade relations with the west. After the third century, she turned her attention to S. E. Asia. Her trade with



Iran, Central Asia and China was carried on mainly through the land routes. The influential guild organizations acted as bankers. Even with the growth of metallic currency the earlier barter system continued for a long time. In the ancient period class conflict was sought to be minimized through the working of the caste system, and hoarding, undue raising of prices and unjust taxation were regarded as inimical to the interest of the people.

With the advent of the Muslims and the gradual growth of the Hindusthani culture, several casteless religious sects came into being, but the old caste society still continued. Even the Hindus converted to Islam continued their caste observances. As the Muslim concentrated on urban areas, economic life in the villages, which included Muslim converts, continued as before. Trade with the west declined somewhat, though several new industries developed in the country.

With the coming of the West, especially western education, Indian society underwent a great deal of change. The idea of human equality and the brotherhood of man led to the establishment of the Brahma Samaj by Rammohun Roy and Devendranath Tagore. Dayananda Saraswati wanted a society based on the idea of varṇas as opposed to *jāti*. The members of the Satyasodhak Samaj declared war against the high caste Hindus. Mahatma Gandhi's crusade against the system of untouchability is well known, while the practice of untouchability was declared illegal by the Indian Parliament. Various developments in the economic life of the people such as those in transport and communication, the spirit of individuality and new forms of occupation have shaken the foundations of the joint family system.

Modern Indian social life seems to revolve around the idea of social equality. The government is vigilant about the rights and privileges of the backward classes. The inferior status of Hindu women has been sought to be removed by enlightened legislations. It is in the field of education that the society has moved farthest away from old ideas. After independence, specialists sought to reconcile the western system with the Indian tradition, though its final shape is yet to emerge.

During the British period, the massive exploitation of the country led to the decline of her national industries and the consequent ruralisation. In addition, commercialisation of agriculture, dispossession of the old peasantry by money lenders and the paucity of rural labour further complicated the picture. Despite railroad construction, a uniform postal system, efficient banking and currency system and the



co-operative movement, the very nature of foreign rule proved itself to be a handicap. Mahatma Gandhi tried to revive cottage industries through his charka movement, but, without state aid, it could not produce the desired result. After independence, the country's declared objective, the creation of a "socialist pattern of society", has been in keeping with the Dharmaśāstra ideal which, though emphasizing individualism, regards individuals as part of the broader society.

Despite the division of the society into many castes religion has all along provided a stabilizing factor in Indian society. But the attitude of contentment, again due to the religious factor, has been undergoing a change under the impact of the West. This new attitude accepts everybody as a part of God and tries to prevent the exploitation of the poorer section of the community by the stronger. The latter is in consonance with the idea of dharma or natural justice which protects everybody and punishes the wrong-doer. The self-satisfaction of the people derives its sustenance from the age-old ideal that true enjoyment ultimately comes through renunciation.

Indian religion and philosophy have been characterized by their search for truth and prescribing a way of life leading to it. An Indian philosopher is an intellectual who leads an exemplary austere life, which is the way leading to perfection. Various creeds are regarded as so many paths leading to the same goal. Even foreign elements have been incorporated in doctrines and rituals. The major value of Hindu system is enjoyment through renunciation. It asks people to give up actions based merely on self-interest, although it does not ask them to give up all interests. The dynamic ethic of the karma doctrine helps people to accept the ebb and flow of life with equanimity and work hopefully for the future. Together with it goes the idea of rebirth—the two pillars of Hindu ethics. The two ideas of austerity and Yoga have been basic to some of the religious systems of India. The latter, by prescribing a set of physico-mental exercise, helps people to look inwards which is helpful for salvation.

The origin of Hinduism goes back to the Vedas, though pre-Aryan influence has been detected on the development of the cults of Rudra-Śiva and Śakti. The excessive formalism of the animistic later Vedic religion produced a reaction during the period of the Upaniṣads when esoteric knowledge of the Brahman came to be regarded as the *sumum bonum* of life. In between these two currents of thought the general mass of people were at a loss. Obviously they wanted a simpler form



of religion which would satisfy their emotional cravings. The growth of Buddhism and Jainism further strengthened this attitude. But their emphasis on asceticism and an ethical code of life could not satisfy the emotional needs of the people who fell on the Dravidian mode of worshipping the deity with leaves, flowers and water. The growth of bhakti pushed the earlier two modes, karma (formalism) and jñāna (knowledge), into the background. The Brahmanical authorities had to make way to the cult of bhakti. The Bhagavadgītā synthesizes the three types of religion, and, since then this synthesizing spirit has been a dominant feature of Hindu thought. Despite the dominance of Vedāntic absolutism and monotheism, and the dualism of the Sāṃkhya in the domain of Indian philosophy, Indian religion never identified itself with any one school of thought. It has thus retained its perennial charm and popular appeal.

The most essential value in the field of religion cherished by Ancient India was that all religions are the same in essentials leading to the same destiny. Perfect toleration was another maxim. The individual's free choice of a religious system was recognized, while religious sects were enjoined to respect each other's views. The ethical values of the time seemed to revolve around the ideas of karma and transmigration within the broader framework of varṇāśramadharma. Various types of humanitarian activities provided the social ethics of the day.

With the coming of the Muslims, all the religious systems suffered persecution. Despite Akbar's attempt to propagate a syncretistic national religion, the Din-i-Ilahi, his death saw the revival of communal antagonism. However, the presence of Islam gave rise to a few sects which denounced idolatry, polytheism and caste. The most important of these sects was Sikhism founded by Nanak.

With the advent of the West, the Christian missionaries became active in converting specially the aboriginals and the untouchables. Their scathing criticism of Hinduism and Islam produced a definite reaction in the country. Even Rammohan Roy despite his initial favourable reaction to Christian ideas, rejected it as unsuitable for the country. In order to synthesize the best of the East with that of the West he founded the Brahma Sabha in 1828, renamed Brahma Samaj by Devendranath Tagore in 1846. Another reformer and a bitter critic of some aspects of Hinduism, Dayananda Saraswati, founded the Arya Samaj in 1875. Among other reformers, who emphasized the Hindu ideal of synthesis, were Ramakrishna and his disciple, Swami Vivekananda. While Rabindranath believed in the Religion of Man,



Mahatma Gandhi preached the idea of Truth and the ethical basis of all human actions. Sri Aurobindo believed in Integral Yōga and a Cosmic force ruling over the universe.

One of the major values of the Indian people in the domain of religion is that an individual is a free agent in his choice of a particular religious system, which has been recognized by the constitution of India. Political and social disability of a person for his religious affiliation is illegal according to the country's constitution. India is a secular state which demands religious toleration on the part of her citizenry. She also recognizes that all religions are true and the state's responsibility is to allay religious communalism. The principle of natural justice provides the base of her national ethos.

In the field of politics, it was customary to believe that God prescribed laws for the administration of the state. Treatises dealing with politics, like Kauṭilya's Arthaśāstra and Dharmaśāstra literature, discuss political maxims but not with the existing political conditions. The state never gave its exclusive patronage to a particular religious system in Ancient India. Toleration was the dominant note of her polity. About the origin of the state system, the Buddhist literature portrays an ideal situation in which there was no misery or oppression in the state. In course of time when this situation changed, people elected a chief for the proper maintenance of the social order and justice. He used to get a share of the paddy for his exertion. Later Brahmanical literature fixes his remuneration at one-sixth of the agricultural produce of the state. The origin of the idea of the divinity of kings goes back to the Kuṣāṇas. The Manu Saṃhitā describes the king as a "great god." But he was enjoined also to look after the interest of his subjects, or else he would rot in hell. This strong tradition of the country prevented the state from arrogating to itself despotic powers. Moral and material improvement of the people was the main function of the state. The main obligations of the king included looking after agriculture and the proper maintenance of varṇāśramadharma. Kauṭilya wants the king to realize that, like the soldiers, he was but a paid servant of the state and should look after the welfare of his people. He should abide by dharma or the customary standard of the land and support the interests of the corporate organizations based on age-old traditions.

The basic ideal of Ancient Indian polity was that the state should enhance the material welfare and the spiritual outlook of the people. Individual growth, so long as it was in accordance with the dharma ideals of the society, should be encouraged. The state should also



look after the economic framework of the society and the proper maintenance of the fruitful occupations of the people.

With the establishment of the Muslim rule in India, its idea of equality had important implications for later Indian political thought. The function of the state to look after the welfare of the society, as envisaged by some Muslim rulers, was in keeping with the same ideal of Ancient India. The ideas of democracy, the rule of law and of equality before the law mingled with her ancient heritage giving rise to the country's new constitution which guarantees justice to all, liberty of thought and expression, equality of status and opportunity and the dignity of the individual. It seems that the state will look after the dharma, artha and kāma of its citizens, while leaving the attainment of mokṣa to individual initiative.

Coming to the field of law, the author points out that law was never distinct from religion in the country. Since the Vedic Age people have been familiar with the concept of dharma or natural justice, adjudication simply meant its proper enforcement by the Assembly of Elders. Thus dharma was an important part of the Indian traditions which were the unwritten law of the country. The four recognised sources of law were Śrutis or the Vedas, the Smṛtis or the Dharma-śāstras, sadācāra or the customs and one's conscience. Later on, the Purāṇas, learned Brahmins etc., were also recognized as sources of law. In course of time Dravidian customs, village customs, traditions of caste communities and traders etc., came within the purview of Hindu law. This shows that the autonomy of framing laws by individual groups or communities was recognized provided it did not contravene the dharma ideal and the Śruti laws. In general, therefore, Hindu law is judged as liberal and adaptable.

The basic ideal of Ancient Indian jurisprudence was that laws exist in a country for her socio-economic harmony. Laws have come ultimately from God. They are necessary for the growth of individuals and for checking tyranny. They also legitimize man's pleasure of the senses. With the coming of the Muslims, while the non-Muslims were allowed to keep their traditional laws, they had to pay a special tax as non-believers. When non-Islamic traditional customs came in conflict with Islamic moral laws, specially in criminal matters, the latter prevailed provided they did not jeopardize the safety of the state. With the advent of the West, enlightened social legislations began to change the



fabric of the society. The prohibition of sati, validation of the re-marriage of widows and prohibition of child marriage are examples of such enlightened legislation. The Parliament of India is also active in this field.

The basic ideal in the field of Indian arts is its attempt to reconcile enjoyment with renunciation. The division of the society into castes was responsible for the production of varieties in this field and thus monotony was avoided. The backbone of the arts was provided by the conception of dharma. The Mauryas welcomed the influx of Iranian style in architecture and sculpture. With their downfall, Graeco-Roman and Scythian influences came to the fore. India flourished under the patronage of the Scythians.

While the north-west was thus exposed to a variety of foreign influences, two styles of sculpture emerged in the country, one at Mathurā and the other at Amarāvati. Buddhism was their inspiration. The latter school left its mark on the development of the S. E. Asian arts. With the dawn of the Golden Age of the Guptas India witnessed a great efflorescence in the field of arts and literature. It was the age of Kālidāsa, and of Manimekhalai and Silappadikaram in south India. The Nāṭyaśāstra and the various Śilpaśāstras dealt with the intricate technical details of theatre, dancing, architecture and sculpture. The exquisite paintings at the Ajantā caves, which are excellent examples of the blending of the secular with the sacred, have left its deep impression on later Indian art. In the post-Gupta age Buddhism gradually lost its hold on the Indian mind and its place was taken by Hinduism and Jainism. The Hindu temples are the best surviving specimens of Indian architecture. While the north Indian temples have a curvilinear tower and a front porch, the south Indian ones have a pyramidal tower with *maṇḍapa*, *prakāra* and *gōpuras*.

While not neglecting aesthetic aspects, Ancient India recognized the spiritual inspiration of the arts as basic. The fine arts were based on a frank acceptance of the facts of life, which accounts for the erotic sculpture and paintings of the temples of Orissa.

With the coming of the Muslims, the Indo-Islamic style of art came into being, the best example being the Taj Mahal. The other examples of Hindu and Islamic art assimilation were the Rajput and Kangra Schools of painting. It is also obvious in the emergence of the Urdu literature and various new styles of music, like the Khayal and



Quwwali, new innovations in Hindu Dhrupad music, and the use of new instruments, like Rahab, Sarod, Dilruba, etc. Europe's indifference to Indian arts would be obvious from the fact that Lord Bentinck even thought of demolishing the Taj Mahal. Indian style of architecture, however, found favour with the indigenous princes. Lord Curzon's interest was in archaeological preservation of ancient arts only. He showed more interest in the construction of the Victoria Memorial Hall regarded as "a queer production in a pseudo-renaissance style." With the growth of nationalism two revivalist schools of art came into being, one under the leadership of Rabindranath at Santiniketan, and the other at Bombay. But despite the pleadings of the Consulting Architect to the contrary, New Delhi has become "a vast and incongruous monument to British rule in India."

Republican India cherishes the value that her arts should be allowed to flourish, and that folk arts should do the same without outside influence. Classical and folk music should grow unhampered. The stage and screen, while not neglecting western techniques, should emphasize Indian themes. The opening up of more art galleries should educate people in the art traditions of the country.

India's accomplishments in the domain of science have been age-old. The necessity of the study of geometry and arithmetic was realized in the Brahmanical Age (800 B. C.) with the growth of the sacrificial cults. The exigencies of building sacrificial altars made the study of geometry essential, while a knowledge of arithmetic was found helpful for calculating the auspicious starting time for the sacrificial rituals. With the development of freedom of thought, which characterized the intellectual revolt against Vedic culture in the sixth century B. C., a new seat of learning at Taxila came into being, where the study of medicine and surgery was encouraged, one of whose products was the famous physician, Jivaka. Gradually Indian ideas influenced Pythagorean mathematics and the writings of Hippocrates and Plato. Indian astrology was influenced by Greek ideas. During the Kuṣāṇa period was compiled the Caraka Samhitā, a compendium on Indian medicine, and a little later Śuśruta wrote his book on surgery. The former work proves the advanced level of research in Chemistry. During the Gupta period, Āryabhaṭa (c. 499 A. D.) and Varāhamihira (c. 505 A. D.) wrote important treatises on mathematics and astronomy respectively. India made important contributions in mathematics by her invention of the decimal system of notation and the idea of zero. Mineralogy and allied arts made considerable strides in Ancient India. During the post-Gupta period up to the Muslim conquest, India stagnated somewhat, though



she made considerable advance in the sciences, like higher mathematics, astronomy, algebra, medicine and chemistry. Indian mathematics, astronomy and medical science were greatly appreciated by Ancient China.

The basic value which inspired Ancient Indian science was that it should serve the purpose of humanitarianism and natural justice or dharma. Ultimately, it should unravel the mystery of the universe for obtaining a true apprehension of the Ultimate Reality.

During the Muslim period, Indian astronomy received patronage of rulers who built observatories at Jaipur and Delhi for the furtherance of astronomical knowledge. The Yunani medical system, similar to Indian Āyurveda, was introduced in India during this period. With the advent of the West, the people gradually took the western sciences and produced a brilliant array of scientists in this century. Independent India greatly values the study of, and research in, the sciences. People realize that they can be put to use for better living conditions, but the destructive uses should be controlled by every means.

In international relations India has all along been inspired by the concept of dharma or natural justice. She is also inspired by the Asokan ideals of tolerance, non-violence, peace and universalism. It is true that some Indian rulers did not adhere to them and thereby went against the age-old ideals of the country. Ancient India regarded that warfare should be resorted to as a last expedient. A few historians trace India's expansionist motive in the establishment of her colonies in Central Asia and S. E. Asia conveniently forgetting the historical fact that wherever the Indians went they worked out a rapprochement with the indigenous people. Independent India has all along refused to align herself with either of the super-powers, and consistently followed her policy of non-alignment, which is in keeping with her ideal of peace and universalism. Through the U. N. O. she has worked consistently for international peace and amity. She has also supported struggle against colonialism and racial discrimination and the right of self determination for oppressed people everywhere.

Among India's cherished goals in international relations may be included her earnest desire to end all wars as a means of state policy, because she believes that nobody, not even the so-called victor, gains from the war. She also believes that she should stay free from the two power blocs and preserve her neutral stance based on dharma and *ahimsā*.



In an Appendix the author discussed the meaning of the word dharma. He maintains that the primary meaning of the word is natural justice. In some of the *Samhitās* it denotes customs which are supposed to be parts of divine justice. It may signify the natural state of affairs. In the *Dharmaśāstra* literature it signifies the laws which maintain the social order or laws signifying "solemn affirmation by a party to a suit".

Among other secondary meanings of the term, we may note sacrificial rituals and ethical principles, though its primary meaning is natural justice.

Chattopadhyaya added a new dimension to his intellectual repertoire in 1962 when he published his first book on Indian religions, *Evolution of Theistic Sects up to the Time of Śaṅkarācārya* (re-entitled *Evolution of Hindu Sects up to the Time of Śaṅkarācārya*, in the second edition of 1970). In dealing with the genesis of Hindu sectarian worship, he remarks that Hinduism is probably the only peoples religion in the world which originated from the soils of India. In that process it absorbed elements from diverse sources, including foreign sources. Though Vedic religion was primarily ritualistic, yet traces of sectarian worship, with its primary emphasis on Bhakti (devotion), can be found in the *Rgveda*. The *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* refers to devotion to god and the importance of a preceptor in the way of spiritual realization, two hallmarks of Hindu devotional sectarian worship. The famous grammarian Pāṇini, in his *Aṣṭadhyāyī* (400 B. C.) refers to the devotees of Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna. The non-Aryan origin of Hindu sectarianism should be rejected on several grounds: firstly, the Buddhist work, *Niddesa*, which refers to the worship of horse, cow, dog, crow, Vāsudēva, etc., is tendentious and thus unreliable. The depiction of Gaja-Lakṣmī on some coins from Ayodhyā, Ujjainī, etc., of Indra on the coins of Pāṇcāla chief, Indramitra, of Agni on the coins of Agnimitra, only shows that these deities were preferred occasionally, though full-fledged sectarian worship was yet to develop. Patañjali's statement of images of Śiva, Skanda and Viśākha for purposes of worship has not been corroborated by archaeological evidence. The classical sources refer to various deities of the Indian people, although it is difficult to say whether they referred to sectarian worship or not.

For tracing the origin of sectarian worship, one has to go back to the Vedic commentator, Yāska (600 B. C.), who reduced the Vedic deities into three principal ones: the Sun in heaven, Indra or Vāyu in



the intermediate region, and Agni in the terrestrial region. It was about this period that the Upaniṣadic seers broke away from Vedic ritualism, and started emphasizing their views on Karma (action) and birth, Mukti (final release) and enjoyment-through-renunciation. Thus, while one section of the elites persisted with their Vedic ritualism, the other emphasized esoteric knowledge. The common people were thus in need of a simpler form of religion. In their search for a new type of religion, they were helped by their Dravidian compatriots who used to worship their deities with flowers, leaves, water, etc. From the Dravidians the Aryans got the idea of yoga, Siva-Paśupati cult, liṅga and mother-goddess cult, worship of trees, animals and water, and the idea of pūjā. The idea of devotion in Hindu religion also comes from Dravidian sources and the *Bhagavad Gītā* grew in that background.

While the origin of the Upaniṣadic philosophy, Buddhism, Jainism and Cārvāka materialism revolutionized the Indian thought ferment, the priestly class came to terms with popular trends towards devotional religion. This tendency was further heightened by people dividing themselves into separate groups for the purpose of sectarian worship. It emphasized the belief in one personal supreme god. The idea of Yoga, with its emphasis on the concentration on one object of worship, and Yapa, with its emphasis on muttering the name of a particular god, also helped the process of crystallization of sectarian worship.

Of the principal Hindu sects in pre-Christian India, Vaiṣṇavism flourished in Madhyadeśa, with Śaivism, Śāktism and the solar cult flourishing in the outlying areas of the Aryan middle-country. It is not unlikely that the cult of Viṣṇu found its votaries among the elites and some sections of the masses, while that of Śiva flourished among general masses.

With the fall of the Mauryas in 187 B. C. India was invaded by the Bactrian Greeks, and, later on, by the Scythians. They might have some influence on the development of Śāktism and the Saura cult, but Vaiṣṇavism remained immune from any foreign influence. The growth of the war-like Kārtikeya cult at this time might have been due to the desire of the Indians to eject these foreigners from the Indian soil.

With the emergence of the Guptas in 319-20 A. D., Brāhmaṇism became dominant again, and devotional religion receded to the background. Its place was taken by Tāntricism. It preaches a new type of Sādhana (spiritual training) through Yantra (diagrams symbolically



representing the god), Mantrā (chanting of sacred chants), Mudra (hand gestures), and Nyasa (the control of breath for depositing of god in the body). It also emphasized the Sāṃkhya idea of Puruṣa and Prakṛti. As a well-established religion, it was taken to Tibet by the Buddhist Tantrik preacher, Padmasambhava, in 747 A. D. The Sdok-Kak Thom inscription of Jayavarman II, who became the king of Cambodia in 802 A. D. also attests to the prevalence of the cult in S. E. Asia.

In Section B, the author deals with the origin and growth of Vaiṣṇavism. It originated in the pre-Christian eras with the worship of the human hero, Vāsudeva, the Vṛṣṇi leader, who, in course of time, came to be identified with the Vedic god Viṣṇu and the ṛṣi-god Nārāyaṇa. It originated in Mathurā and spread to Saurāṣṭra later on. About the time of Pāṇini (fifth century B. C.), Vāsudeva was coupled with Arjuna. By the second century B. C. the worship of the latter was dropped and Vāsudeva became the supreme god. His followers undertook to convert the foreigners of the north and north-west of the country. By the time of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* (second century B. C.) Nārāyaṇa became an adjective of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa. By the second half of the first century B. C. the cult of Saṃkaraṣaṇa, which prevailed in the hilly regions of the north, became associated with Vāsudeva.

The Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa cults were greatly opposed by the Śaivites. In order to overcome this opposition, Vāsudevism had to ally itself with various other cults, e. g., it absorbed the vegetation cult of Saṃkaraṣaṇa. As a result, it grew up to be a syncretistic cult. This syncretistic attitude was voiced in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* which tries to reconcile the three ways of spiritual fulfilment, Jñāna, Karma and Bhakti. Its idea of Avatārahood enabled it to absorb a great variety of deities in its pantheon. Moreover, the liberal view of the text on the caste system enabled the Vaiṣṇavas to ignore caste orthodoxy, and make their religion enlivened with democratic sentiments. Viṣṇu became specially the god of Bhakti because of his earlier beneficial character. His special association with cattle also made him a favourite god because, in ancient India, the wealth of a person was measured in terms of the number of cows he possessed.

A new sect, the Pāñcarātra, emerged within the Vaiṣṇava fold about the beginning of the Christian era. It included the five Vṛṣṇi brothers, Vāsudeva, Saṃkaraṣaṇa, Pradyumna, and Aniruddha, while the fifth brother, Śāmba, was associated with the solar cult. Saṃkaraṣaṇa was originally a snake god, and Pradyumna and Aniruddha



were minor gods of originally independent sects. Saṃkaraṣana emanated from Vāsudeva, according to the Vyūha doctrine, and, Pradyumna and Aniruddha from the former. The main tenets of the sect were propounded on Mount Meru which is identified with the Pamir, and it is not unlikely that the sect got some of its ideas from Central Asia.

In an interesting analysis of the Avatāra doctrine the author points out that, of the three human Avatāras, Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva, Rāma-Dāśaratha, and Paraśurāma, only the last was a Brahmin. He might originally have been a god of the Brahmins. With their acceptance of Vaiṣṇavism, Paraśurāma became an incarnation of Viṣṇu. The influence of Christianity on the growth of Vaisnavism is rejected, while the possibility of Mahāyāna influence is not ruled out by the author. He also thinks that the early doctrine of the Pāñcarātras were based on the Vedas, but Sāṅdilya became the founder of the heterodox Pāñcarātra system during the Kuṣāṇa age.

On the Gopāla-Kṛṣṇa sub-sect, the author holds that the story of the suppression of Kāḷiya-Nāga, which involved the subordination of the Nāga cult by that of Gopāla, came into vogue about 300 A. D. The story of the amorous dalliances of Kṛṣṇa with the Gopis shows the influence of left-handed Tantricism on the sect. The suppression of Indra-worship by Gopāla-Kṛṣṇa shows the un-Vedic practices of the sub-sect. The Nestorian-Christian influence on the development of the stories concerning Kṛṣṇa's early life is rejected by the author on the ground that the Abhiras, who were thought to be the carriers of such stories to India, entered the country during the period of confusion after Alexander's invasion. This cult came to Bengal about 500 A. D., and started imbibing Tāntrik elements like the mother-goddess cult of the latter.

It was during the age of the Guptas that Vaiṣṇavism flourished most in India. Chandra Gupta II was a great supporter of the faith, and through his daughter, Prabhavati Gupta, who was married to a Vākāṭaka prince, made headway in south India as well. The male members of the Pallava royal family might have been the followers of Vedic religion, but its female members were devoted worshippers of Vasudeva. During the rule of the later Guptas, the Pāñcarātra cult became dominant. After the fall of the Guptas, Vaiṣṇavism lost its ground in north India. The Viṣṇu Purāṇa (fifth century A. D.), which contains the Gospel of Vaiṣṇavism, was considerably influenced by Yoga philosophy. The Vaiṣṇava cult of north India emphasized Jñāna and Karma, while in



south India, it came under the influence of three preachers, Kaṣāyayogin, Bhūtayogindra and Bhrānta-Yogindra, who preached a type of emotional Vaiṣṇavism before the advent of the Alvars.

Śaivism grew up around the Vedic god Rudra-Śiva. The ancient Iranians were familiar with the cult, and he was probably a god of the Indo-Europeans. The prevalence of the cult is attested by the *Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā* and the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* of Pāṇini. From the works of the Classical Greek writers, the author infers the existence of a Śaiva sect in the hilly regions of north-western India. The Mahābhārata refers to a Pāśupata sect whose followers regarded Śiva as a healing and vegetation god. It is likely that they imbibed the Liṅga cult from the pre-Aryans of the Indus Valley area, and gradually reinterpreted it which divested the cult of its phallic character. This symbol, which was condemned by the Aryans of the *Rgveda*, was accepted by the writers of the Later Vedas. The earliest archaeological evidence of Liṅga emblems has been found at Gudimallam and Bhita. The inscription on the latter proves the gradual fusion of the Nāga cult with Śaivism. On the basis of the interpretation of Przyluski that the two words, Lāṅgula (plough) and Liṅga (penis), are of Austro-Asiatic origin, the author points out that, by accepting the Liṅga cult, Śaivism also assumed the features of a cult of vegetation. On the basis of numismatic evidence, the author shows that Śiva was represented both in his anthropomorphic and phallic forms.

The author doubts the widely-held view that the term Śiva was of Dravidian origin. He holds that the cult might have absorbed Dravidian elements, but there are no sufficient data at present to prove conclusively that the cult itself was of Dravidian origin. Actually, Rudra-Śiva was originally a Vedic god, and, in the course of the evolution of the cult, it imbibed elements from diverse sources, including Dravidian. The reference to the four-faced representation of Śiva-Pāśupati in the Mahābhārata may allude to the borrowing of this type of iconic representation of the deities from the Indus Valley culture.

The cult of Bhakti became associated with Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa earlier than Rudra-Śiva. In the portrayal of Śaivism of the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* emphasis is laid on both Bhakti and Yoga, although the major emphasis is on the latter aspect. The text also deals with the benign and the terrible aspects of the god. The association of the phallus is referred to as well. The author argues, on the basis of numismatic evidence that, among some tribal people of the north-western part of the



country, Śiva was regarded as the actual ruler of the state, while the actual ruler carried on the administration on his behalf or as his incarnation. In the post-Vedic period Śiva and Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa became the greatest deities of the Hindu pantheon.

About the beginning of the second century A. D. an orthodox system of the Pāsupatas emerged under the leadership of Lakuli. Its main text, the *Pāsupata Sūtra*, was taught by Lakuli to his disciple, Kuṣika. The tenets of the sect, as propounded in the above text, are somewhat different from those in the Dakṣa story of the Mahābhārata. The text prescribes that a devotee of the Lākuliśa sub-sect should not talk to a Śūdra or a woman. It lays special emphasis on Yoga and Bhakti. It enjoins that Pāsupata ascetic should besmear his body with ashes three times a day, lead a lonely life in a house, a cave or cremation ground, control his senses and live by begging. The eating of meat was allowed, though the animal should not have been killed by the ascetic himself for his food. The author discerns in these practices some congruence with left-hand Tantricism. A Pāsupata of this sect is also expected to carry a Śiva-Liṅga on his body.

About the origin of this orthodox system among the Saivites, the author makes an interesting observation that probably originated when the country was under the dominance of the foreigners, the Scythians, when people did not adhere to the dictates of the orthodox caste system and imbibed alien ideas. In order to save the system the reformer, Lakuli, gave Pāsupata Śaivism an orthodox slant.

The picture of the Pāsupata system, as gleaned from the Dakṣa story of the Mahābhārata, shows that an unorthodox system, which denied the idea of Varnāśramadharma, emerged among the Pāsupatas. About the origin of Virabhadra and Mahākālī, from the bodies of Śiva and Umā respectively during the Dakṣayajna, the author holds that the former might have been a Dravidian deity, and the latter a goddess of the Proto-Australoid substratum of the Indian population.

Pāsupata Śaivism with its emphasis on emotional relation with the god came under the influence of the theistic Sāṃkhya system. It received royal patronage from various royal houses, both Indian and foreign. Apart from wearing matted locks and carrying iron lances, in common with other Saivites, the Pāsupatas also wore skin garments. The existence of non-Pāsupata Śaiva sects is proved by numismatic evidence. It is likely that the growth of various sub-sects in Śaivism was due to the patronage of foreign rulers in the north-west. Seals prove the



existence of Śaiva sub-sects in eastern India as well. On the basis of an evidence of the *Mahābhārata* the author infers the probable existence of a heterodox form of Śaivism in the Magadha region which sanctioned human sacrifice in temples dedicated to Śiva.

In the Gupta period, however, the distinction between the orthodox and heterodox Saivite sects gradually disappeared. The author then refers to the installation of the Liṅgas of Upamiteśvara and Kapileśvara together with the portraits of these teachers in the "Teachers Shrine," as mentioned in the Mathurā inscription of Chandra Gupta II of the year 380 A.D. The shrine contained the Liṅgas dedicated to the memory of the teachers of the lineage of Uditācārya. These teachers, who were the followers of Lakuli, gave up their life through the peculiar yogic process in which the last breath passed through a break in the skull. Through this process they became absorbed in Śiva. Thus the Liṅgas bearing the portraits of the above teachers were not the phallic symbols of the god but the god himself.

The Lākuliśa sect flourished greatly during the Gupta period under the leadership of a line of great Pāśupata teachers. Human sacrifice became a feature of the religion in the Middle country during this period. Some of the eclectic Gupta kings, Mihirakula, and many rulers belonging to the dynasties, like the Vākātakas, Nalas, Kadambas, Śālaṅkāyanas, Maitrakas, etc., were Śaivas.

The chief literary work dealing with Śaivism during this period is the *Vāyu Purāṇa*. It refers to twenty eight Avatāras of Śiva who were conceived in imitation of the Viṣṇu incarnations of the *Mahābhārata*. The text contains the names of the areas where Śaivism prevailed. It refers to three Sāṃkhya teachers as incarnation of Śiva thereby proving the close association of the two systems. It also states that Śiva appears in each Kalpa along with four disciples, a statement which proves the influence of Vaiṣṇava Vyūha doctrine on Śaivism.

The other important Śaiva document, the *Pāśupata Sūtra* by Kaundinya, describes the stages a Śaiva aspirant was expected to go through before becoming a full-fledged Yogi. In the first instance, he gains full control over his body and mind through a course of training. In the second, he develops an aversion for life in society, puts on an ugly external appearance thereby deliberately bringing upon himself abuses of people. In the third, he lives in cremation grounds to realize the transitoriness of human life, and meditates on Paśupati. The last stage consists of total renunciation of the world and concentration of the god.



This process of training leads to the realization of the god being the supreme cause and to the end of all misery.

Among other sub-sects of Śaivism, the author discusses the ideas and practices of the Kāpālikas, Kālāmukhas, and Ardhanārīśvaras. He refers to the fact that an attempt at reapproachment between Saivism and Vaiṣṇavism was made in the Kuṣāṇa period. After 500 A. D. Vaiṣṇavism gradually lost its hold on north India, and Śaivism became more prominent. Of the post-Gupta Śaivas, the author distinguishes between the Smārta Śaivas and Āgama Śaivas. The former acknowledged the authority of the Vedas, while the latter did not do so. With the emergence of Tāntricism from seventh century A. D. onwards the Āgama Śaivas came under its influence in south India.

The accounts of Yuan-Chwang contains a detailed description of the Pāśupata sub-sect. It spread outside India, e.g. it spread to Khotan, as the Chinese traveller informs us.

Coming to the Śāktas worshipping the Mother Goddess, the author points out that the worship of Śakti or female energy has been age-old in India. The various strata of the Indian population, the Proto-Australoids, the Dravidians and the Aryans, had their mother goddesses, who, in course of time, coalesced to form the Great Mother or Prakṛti of the Sāṃhya philosophy. In the Ṛgvedic age the cult of the Mother Goddess was not an established one, while the worship of the female principle was an important tenet of the religious beliefs of the Indus Valley people. During the period of the *Vājasaneyi Samhitā* the Vedic god, Rudra, became associated with the non-Aryans, while the Mother Goddess of the latter came to be associated with Rudra. In the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* Ambikā becomes Rudra's wife. In the same work she is also referred to as Umā, Durgā, Kātyāyanī, Karālī, etc. These names might have been the nomenclatures of distinct divinities. They coalesced in the person of the Great Mother. As Śiva was the combination of Rudra and Agni, his Śakti combined in herself the spouses of the two gods. Of the local goddesses, Umā Haimavatī might have been worshipped in the Himalayan region and the cult of Kanyā Kumārī prevailed in south India. The two names, Kālī and Karālī, originally represented the fearful and destructive aspects of the fire god. Durga's association with the Vedic goddess of evil, Nirṛiti, points to the fearful aspect of the goddess. During the period of the *Mahābhārata*, the Brahmanical thinkers thought of these various female divinities as parts of or identical with the Great Mother.



No coins or epigraphs alluding to the Śākta worshippers in the pre-Christian epoch have been found, which shows that the Mother Goddess cult prevailed only among the masses. This is corroborated by stone discs and terra cotta objects depicting the Mother Goddess from various parts of north India. Here representation on some stone discs from west India, where Śaivism was dominant, shows the close alliance of the two cults. It is likely that the Babylonian cult of Ishtar-Nana made its way into Taxila during the Maurya period. By this period three varieties of Śākta sects came to prevail: the first in the north-west whose adherents worshipped the Goddess in unison with a Father-God, probably Rudra-Śiva; another sect in east India associated her with mystical diagrams; the third sect worshipped the Virgin Goddess in the south. The name, Śākambharī, given to Durgā in the *Mahābhārata*, shows her close association with vegetation cult. The description of the Mother Goddess enjoying liquor, meat and sacrificial victims and living in the Vindhya regions shows the adoption of Proto-Australoid elements by the Aryan Mother Goddess cult. The attempt by the Vaiṣṇavas to absorb the Mother Goddess failed because Śiva had already absorbed some of the traits popular with the masses. Her association with Buddhist Caityas in the same text shows her imbibing Buddhist elements.

During the age of the Guptas, the Śāktas came under the influence of Tāntricism, as proved by the extant inscriptions. The *Caṇḍī-Māhātmya* of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* shows how the Great Mother came into being by combining female energies of various divinities. The influence of Central Asia is obvious from her two names, Sākinī (coming from the Scythians), and Dākinī (coming from the Dags of Dagistan). The origin of the goddess in a lake called Col may show her provenance in the lake of the same name between vallies of Amu Daria and Syr Daria in Central Asia. Śaṅkara tried to rid Śāktism of its Tantrik practices, although he himself was a worshipper of Devī.

Coming to the Saura sect, the author points out that the Sun god was looked upon as a healing god in the Vedic age. The famous *Gāyatrī* is an invocation to him. The first reference to a Saura sect is found in the writings of Greek classical authors. During the pre-Christian epoch, two classes of Saura sects existed in India: the followers of the first worshipped the Vedic god Sūrya, while those of the second worshipped Helios or Mithra. The influence of the cult was marginal due to the prominence of Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism.

During the early centuries of the Christian era the Scythian-Magian sun cult made some headway in India. The Zoroastrian cult also left



its imprint on the Sauras, as proved by the story of Sāmba in the later Purāṇas. The Sauras of south India remained immune from foreign influence. During the time of Śaṅkara there were probably six Saura sub-sects, though they were not very influential.

Coming to a discussion of the warrior god, Kārtikeya, the author shows that his cult found favour with some tribal people like the Audumbaras and Yaudheyas. Kārtikeya or Skanda used to be involved in times of crisis. Although the Epics and Purāṇas describe Kārtikeya as the son of Śiva, there is no archaeological corroboration of the fusion of their cults. From the reference in the *Mahābhāṣya* to the selling of the images of Śiva, Skanda and Viśākha by the Mauryas in their greed of gold, the author infers that the separate mention of the last two shows that originally they were separate entities, although in later times they were the names of one divinity. The *Mahābhārata* refers to the four forms of the god immediately after his birth, Skanda, Kumāra, Viśākha and Mahāsenā. The first three are the names of Agni who in course of time became associated with Rudra. In this process of amalgamation they became names of the son of Rudra. Visakha's association with Umā might show that the former was a deity of the Himalayan region. When Umā became Rudra-Śiva's wife, Viśākha became identified with the son of Rudra. These details show that the Skanda or Kārtikeya sect was the result of the fusion of minor sects, although, as a cult, it was not a major one in the Hindu pantheon.

Chattopadhyaya's next major publication on Indian religion, *Reflections on the Tantras*, deals with probably the most-misunderstood and most-maligned aspects of Hinduism. Some scholars interpret Tāntricism as a vulgar religion of the uncouth, while, for others, it is nothing but a crude form of fertility cult. The author proposes to dispel the cobweb surrounding the cult and to interpret it from the phenomenological point of view. He avers that it did not originate nucleating around the Mother Goddess worship, as is commonly held, for the original divinities of the cult were the Sun, the Śaktis, like Vāgīśvarī, and a goddess of the potter class, Kubjikā. It began during the Scytho-Kuṣāṇa period under the aegis of the Māgā Brahmins. However, the rudimentary beginnings of the cult can be traced back to an earlier epoch, for it is a syncretistic cult which includes Vedic animal sacrifice and diagrams, the monistic tendencies of the Upaniṣads, elements of the Yoga system of Patañjali as also aspects of devotion of the Purāṇas. The various strata of the Indian people, like the Negritos, the Australoids, the Dravidians and



the Aryans made significant contributions to it, while non-Indian sources also contributed towards its growth. It is significant that, while the Śākta and Śaiva Tantras imbibed heterodox ideas, the Vaiṣṇavite Tāntric cult preferred a more orthodox slant.

For the origin of the esoteric Tāntrik practices, we will have to analyse a story of Mahācīnācākrakrama, an important text of Tāntricism. It informs us that despite Vasiṣṭhā's worship of Tārā for ten thousand years at Kāmākhyā she did not show herself to him. He was on the verge of cursing her when she appeared and asked him to go to Mahā-cīna, identified with the whole area north of the Himalayas including Tibet, parts of Mongolia and Western China, to learn the secret of her worship from Janārdana-Viṣṇu Buddha. On going there, Vasiṣṭha found Buddha worshipping the goddess with wine etc., being surrounded by women. Coming back to Nilacala he performed his worship with the five M's, namely madya (wine), māmsa (meat), matsya (fish), mudra (parched kidney beans) and maithuna (sexual intercourse) with a caṇḍāla woman. This anecdote helps us to come to the conclusion that the practice originated in the region of Mongolia whence it migrated to India through the Kāmarūpa region of Assam, and that it was popular with the low-caste people originally. Significantly enough, Kāmarūpa is famous as the yonipīṭha where the Great Mother's pudendum muliebre fell after Viṣṇu cut her body to pieces. This story also adds a new dimension to Indian religion by unifying two apparently opposite tendencies, pravṛtti (worldly inclination) and nivṛtti (renunciation), which has become one of the key features of Tāntricism, for, according to it, a spiritual aspirant should aspire to culture a spirit of detachment and asceticism despite being surrounded by objects of sense pleasure.

The text prescribes, while dealing with the details of this esoteric spiritual practice, that a pretty and youthful girl, totally nude and wearing perfume, should be made to appear before the aspirant in the presence of his preceptor. The former will worship the Mother Goddess in the private parts of the girl; and then take recourse to prāṇāyāma, always remaining calm and thinking of the Mother Goddess being there. The preceptor should adequately guide the aspirant. He should be made to realize that all the divinities reside in the body of the woman. Of the three modes of worship, yonipīṭha (worship on the yoni), mantrapīṭha (worship with sacred formulas) and manaḥpīṭha (mental worship), the first is the most efficacious. The woman chosen should be either an actress, or a Kāpālīnī, a prostitute, a washerwoman, a barberwoman, a Brahmin woman, a Sudra woman or a milkmaid.



After her worship she should be regarded as a Bhairavī. He should also worship his penis and regard himself as a Bhairava. At the time of the intercourse, however, his semen must not come out. In the pose of embracing he should say the prescribed formulas. This mode of worship should continue for three days with complete mastery over the mind. Those, who do not have such mastery, should fix their attention on the yoni of the woman and regard her as the Great Mother.

Such practices have naturally taxed modern minds. The author points out that, according to the Tāntrik sources, such practices should be undertaken by people having complete control over their senses and under the guidance of preceptors who have already gone through the process and been recognized as experts in their field. People seeking sensual pleasure out of such practices have been soundly warned about the repercussions. Indeed, by reconciling pravṛtti with nivṛtti, the Tāntric mode of worship has opened up a new avenue of spiritual fulfilment, and, therefore the question of vulgarity does not arise in the case of a kaula or sādḥaka.

Coming to the non-Tāntrik sources, the author refers to the Durga-stotra of the *Mahābhārata* which refers to the permanent habitat of the Great Mother in the Vindhya where she delights herself in wine, meat and sacrificial victims. This region has been the habitat of the Proto-Australoids since time immemorial, while elsewhere the goddess' special connection with the Śabarās and Pulindas has been referred to. These references show the amalgamation of the Aryan Mother Goddess with the Proto-Australoid one, and the adoption of non-Aryan cultic practices by the Śāktas. The erotic dalliances of Kṛṣṇa with the gopis should be mentioned in this connection. Such legends were popular with the Yādavas and Satvatas who migrated to India from Western Asia in proto-historic times. Thus, Tāntrik esotericism is the product of various ethnic elements contributing to it.

Much has been written in recent times regarding the significance of such erotic esoteric practices, specially since the discovery of erotic poses of the sculptured specimens on the temples of Orissa and Khajuraho, as also in the Nepalese Buddhistic symbolism of sambara and the Tibetan Yab-yum. For some theorists, it is "a licence for licentiousness", while for others, it is an allegorical representation of a higher type of spiritual sādḥana through the process of prāṇayāma or ṣaṭcakra-bheda. It has been interpreted to mean that great gratification, through the pancamakara would bring about ultimate renunciation



and mokṣa, or that it is a device to confuse people's minds and keep them ignorant about the real significance of Tāntricism. The worship of the liṅgas may also be mentioned in this connection. Though it was originally associated with the agricultural rites, and the cult of the phallus, it lost these features by the time of the emergence of Tāntricism. Except Kāmarūpa, no direct evidence of yoni worship is forthcoming from any other parts of India. The fertility aspect of Śakti worship probably survives in the cult of navapatrikā during the worship of the goddess Durgā and that of the kula trees supposed to be inhabited by kula yoginis. But the combined Śakti-vegetation cult could hardly have given rise to the pañcamakara sadhana of Tāntricism. It is not unlikely, the author asserts, that cīnācāra came in vogue during the ninth century when Tāntrik treatises like the Kulārṇava and the early Yāmālas were written. The erotic sculptures on the temples of Orissa and Khajuraho were also executed during this period. In course of time various substitutes were prescribed in lieu of the five M's. While such a practice with one's own wife is absolutely forbidden, it may be allowed in cases where the aspirant thinks of himself as Śiva, his wife as the goddess, does not discharge his semen, and refrains from having intercourse with her in future. The ascription of vulgarity to the mithuna figures of some of the late Hindu temples can hardly be entertained if we remember the idea of extreme self-restraint prescribed by the Tāntrik texts for the spiritual aspirant. Some of the Tāntrik texts do not even mention the five M's realizing that such a practice is impossible for an ordinary man.

On the origin of the Śakta Pīṭhas, the author rejects the view that they were originally places where the dismembered yoni of the Great Mother fell, according to Hindu mythologies, ultimately giving rise to the Pīṭhas, in view of the fact that yoni worship is enjoined in connection with the cīnācāra practice only, and the only evidence of such a practice comes from Kāmākhyā. The Pīṭhas, mentioned in the Hevajratāntra, are in Oḍḍiyāna, Jālandhara, Kāmarūpa which have been identified respectively with the Swat Valley, the Jalandhar district of the Punjab and the Kāmākhyapīṭha in Assam, while the location of the fourth Pīṭha, Pūrṇagiri, is uncertain. The location of the first three "on the high roads leading to countries outside India" points to the fact that the origin of the Pīṭhas should be traced to foreign influences. It is likely that the idea of creating Stūpas on the bodily remains of Buddha, which is analogous to the Hindu idea of Pīṭhas, might have been borrowed by the Buddhists from foreign sources, and then passed on to Hinduism in the post-Kuṣāṇa period. The number of Pīṭhas gradually increased to 108,



though not all of them were original Pīṭhas where supposedly the various parts of the body of the wife of Śiva fell. Some originally were places where Mother worship in some form or other prevailed. The gradual association of various Hindu divinities with the Pīṭhas shows that Tāntricism had to make a compromise with orthodox Hinduism for its survival and growth in India. It had to accept the divinity of Śiva, Viṣṇu and his Avatāras, etc. This process of compromise reached its culmination during the time of Kṛṣṇānanda Āgamvāgīśa (16th century), who in his Tantrasāra, forbade the Sūdras to utter the praṇava-mantra, gurumantra, ātmamantra, etc. Thus though Tāntricism began with a liberal attitude it had to fall in line with orthodox Hinduism. This will be further obvious from a consideration of the quality of the religious preceptors from various regions of India. It has been maintained that the gurus from Madhyadeśa or Āryavarta, the heartland of Hinduism, are the best, while those from Bengal, West Punjab and the Patma and Gaya regions, etc., belonged to the middle class and those from Karṇāṭa, the Narmadā region and Kāmboja (identified with the area extending from West Kashmir to the Pāmīr region and beyond) belonged to the lowest class. Thus by ascribing excellence to the gurus from the Āryan heartland, Tāntricism made an attempt to come to a compromise with Hindu-Āryan orthodoxy. With this attitudinal change also came the location of a large number of Pīṭhas in the orthodox country. In this process, the number of Pīṭhas gradually multiplied and finally counted at 1008.

The Tāntrik mode of worship can be studied under three categories, the Kādi, and Hādi and the Khādi. The followers of the first worshipped Kālī, according to some Tantras. The Kādi mantras were used for worldly gains or magical purposes. This cult prevailed in Bhota, Cīna and Mahācīna. The followers of the Hādi mode worshipped Tripurasundarī. Its main objective was the achievement of salvation. It prevailed in Nepāla, Hūṇa and the Pārśvakika country. The Khādi mode involved the worship of any goddess other than Kālī and Tripurasundarī.

Another Tāntrik tradition divides the Tāntric modes of worship into three classes on the basis of the different regions in which they prevailed. Thus the aśvagrāntā mode was in vogue in the region extending from the Vindhya to Cape Comorin, the rathagrāntā in the area from the



Vindhyas to China, and the Viṣṇukrānta in the area between the Vindhyas and Chittagong. This account shows that a form of Tāntricism was prevalent outside India. From the Sdok Kak Thom inscription we learn that Tāntricism was accepted at least by the elite of ancient Cambodia.

On a discussion of the five-fold Āmnāya division of the Tantras, the author refers to a tradition in the *Kubjikāmatatantra* according to which Śiva asked Pārvatī on the Mount Meru (the Pāmir region) to go to Bhāratavarṣa (India) to preach the doctrine. This shows that the doctrine of paścimāmnāya came from the west. This is further corroborated by the fact that the goddess Kubjikā is worshipped by the Bhūtiyas of Almora and the people of the Nepalese and Indian terai regions. The five Āmnāyas, according to Tāntrik traditions, refer to the five directions to which Śiva turned while enunciating the Tāntric doctrines, utara, dakṣina, pūrva, paścima and ūrdhva. The last probably refers to the Tāntric belief that Tāntricism was brought directly from the heaven to the earth. The western inspiration of some of the Tāntrik ideas would be obvious from a consideration of the significance of the names of two groups of female Tāntrik adepts, the ḍākinīs and śākinīs. The former group is associated with the Dags of Dagistan, while the latter's association with the Scythians is obvious. It is highly likely that the Maga Brahmins of the Scythian stock were responsible for spreading a few ideas in the country which became an integral part of Tāntricism.

The worship of the Buddhist goddess Tārā (Mongolian Dara) and the ideas of the śākinīs and ḍākinīs might also have come from the same region through the Maga Brahmins.

The three well-known divisions of the Tāntrik culture are the Dakṣina or the right-hand mode, the Vāma or the left-hand mode and the Kaula mode. The followers of the first worship the Mother Goddess or the Devī. The followers of the second practise extreme renunciation during the day time, while those of the last or the highest form are opposed to the Vedic and Smārta practices. Sometimes the Tāntriks have also been divided into four geographical groups, the Kerala, the Kasmira, the Gauda and the followers of the last, or the Vilāsa group, are spread all over the country.



The Tāntric ideas of *bīja*, *mantra* and *Gāyatrī* are based on the philosophy of *sphoṭavāda*. According to this philosophy, our cognition of the significance of a word comes not from the individual letters of the word, but that there is something above the letters which helps our process of cognition. This is *sphoṭa* or the essence of sound produced by the letters. The adherents of the *padasphoṭa* hold that a word can signify a meaning, while those of *Vākyasphoṭa* maintain that only a sentence can signify the whole meaning. The Tantras make a synthesis between the two, and prescribe the utterance of the word, *Om*, for the Brahmins, but proscribe it for the non-Brahmins. The word denotes the Hindu Trinitarian idea of the god being the creator, preserver and destroyer of the universe. This is the *Śabdabrahman* and all objects are modifications of it. Therefore all objects are grounded in sounds and are equated with them.

A mantra would ever remain a congeries of words unless taken from a guru who transforms it into a living force. There were not only Tāntrik gurus who were ascetics, but also householder gurus. Before the initiation the guru and the novice should live together and observe one another. A boy, an old man, a lame or a slim person, or one who is physically or morally backward should not be accepted as a guru. The novice should have an ideal character, should not be miserly, poverty-stricken, illiterate or proud etc. Tāntricism prescribed that a Brahmin novice should live with his guru for a year, a Kṣatriya for two years, a Vaiśya for three years and a Śūdra for four years. This shows that it operated within the orthodox Hindu social framework. A novice should be initiated on an auspicious day, and he should fast the day before for having a pure body and mind. The choice of the initiation mantra would depend upon the personality of the novice. In deciding upon a particular mantra, the guru takes recourse to one or another of the six diagrams describing the compatibility of a particular mantra with the character of the novice to be initiated. The most interesting of these diagrams is the *kuḷākulacakra* dealing with the five elements, air, fire, earth, water and ether. The guru has to decide which of these elements is dominant in the character of the novice and decide upon the mantra accordingly. To give one example, if the water element is dominant in the novice, then a mantra from the earthly group should be chosen, for earth is supposed to be friendly with the water. This method of choosing a mantra is developed in the *Rudrayāmala*, though it was modified by later Tāntrik writers. They took recourse to the *sphoṭa* theory according to which everything in this world is pre-ordained, specially the pre-arranged relationship between the name of a man and his mantra. The mantra so given



by a guru generates an energy in the initiated, which takes the latter to his desired *sumum bonum*. The author firmly rejects the view of J. N. Farquhar who described such syllables as *Hriṅ*, *Huṅ*, *Āṅ* etc., as nonsensical mantras. He points out that these syllables are not mantras but *bījas*, which, when added to the mantras, make the latter more powerful. For the initiates, these are indeed very meaningful and not aboriginal superstition. Further, these are written in chaste Sanskrit, and appear for the first time in the *Brāhmanas*, and not in the *Atharvaveda*, as Farquhar contended.

Devotion and faith are the two primary requisites of a disciple. He practises yogic meditation, breath control, muttering of his mantra, and fixes his mind on an image or a diagram for as long as he needs to concentrate on one object, after which begins the process of mental *sādhana*. He utters his mantra on different parts of his finger, or on a *rudrākṣa* (red sandal wood) rosary. The *āsana* on which he seats down to utter his *mantrajapa* may be made of *kuśa* grass on which he places a deer skin if he is an ordinary householder, or a tiger skin if he is a *sanyāsin*. Such seats are helpful for mental concentration. If the initiation takes place in *Kurukṣetra*, *Prayāga*, the four *Pīṭhas*, *Śrīgiri* and *Kāśī*, then people need not concern themselves about the time.

*Tāntricism* puts special emphasis on preparing and sanctifying the physical body before *sādhana* can take place. Early rising and bathing must precede the actual worship. The *sādhaka* starts by sanctifying the various parts of the body, after which comes *dhāraṇā* or concentration of the mind on a part of his body, or an image or a *yantra* (a diagram). The last is supposed to be the seat or the body of the divinity. The climax of this process is reached when the *sādhaka* recognizes the identity with his god and achieves final beatitude.

The genesis of *bīja*, mantra and *gāyatrī* goes back to the Vedic age, though the *bīja* and *gāyatrī* were somewhat modified by *Tāntricism* to serve its purpose. The origin of the monosyllabic *bījas* is indeed intriguing. According to some scholars, these were formed from the first letters of the names of the deities, while the *Nirukta* maintains that they originated from the fact that the deities do not like to be directly addressed by their names. Our author significantly asks whether these are connected with the five elements of the *kuḷākulacakra* of the *Rudrayāmala*, though, after applying the principle of the *kuḷākulacakra*, he concludes that it may explain a large number of *bījas*, though not all of them. In the mantra element of *Tāntricism* the author finds a



mixture of Aryan and non-Aryan features. The potency of a mantra can be enhanced by the process known as *puraścaraṇa*. Uttering it on auspicious days, in a lonely place, on the river Ganges, in a sacred place or on solar and lunar eclipse days, would enhance the potency of a mantra.

The mysterious significance of the yantras or diagrams in Tāntrik religion cannot be over-exaggerated. Two varieties of diagrams are available for the Tāntriks, one to be worn around the neck, arm or the lock of hair, as an amulet, the second being taken as identical with the deity. These yantras are not necessarily triangles representing the *yoni* as is assumed by some scholars. Their main function lies in helping the process of *dhyāna* or *japa*. Once concentration on the deity is achieved, the means, i. e., the diagram, is of no importance.

The magical practices in Tāntrik religion arise from the belief that the aspirant should please the planets and the gods of the ten directions. We are informed that when one faces disease, enemy, anger of the king, revolution or impending death, he should perform the *puraścaraṇa* of the planets. It involves the uttering of the prescribed *japamantra* thousand times the period assigned to the planet. The following fire-sacrifice should be performed with logs dedicated to the planet to be appeased which should be one-tenth of the previous number. After performing the *tarpaṇa*, in the course of which he offers water mixed with camphor and prescribed perfumes one tenth of the former number, he should sprinkle camphor water one tenth time of the former number. Lastly, he should feed the Brahmins and shower gifts on them. The reading of the *kavacas*, wearing of various types of gems and the worship of the guardians of the four directions, form part of Tāntric magic. Among other Tāntrik practices, the author mentions the process of *māraṇa* (killing of enemies), *uccāṭaṇa* (tormenting one whom one dislikes), and *vaśīkaraṇa* (making one obsequious to one's demands), while *stambhana* ("arresting, suppressing, restraining") might have come from the Mongolian sources. It is interesting to note their coexistence with the noblest of Tāntrik philosophy. It is not surprising because Tāntrik religion had to cater for popular taste, besides serving sophisticated intellectuals. This is the case with other religious systems as well.

The author traces the origin of Tāntrik esotericism to the Chāndo-gya Upaniṣad, and avers that *cīnācāra* might have strengthened such practices. Of the two forms of Tāntrik *sādhana*, left - and right hand, more emphasis is laid on the former. Even those, who are in favour of



an allegorical interpretation of the Tāntrik philosophy, would have to accept the fact that the pancamakāra sādhanā is equal to the worship of one's supreme god.

The above brief sketch of Chattopadhyaya's primary concern in the field of Indian religions may provide a glimpse of the versatility of the scholar. By way of concluding this section, we will briefly note the skill and methodological approach of the scholar as an interpreter of Ancient Indian religions.

For the present writer, Chattopadhyaya was primarily a historian and phenomenologist of Indian religions. He studied them with the emphasis of the historian. The historian of religion asks us to be aware of the historical and cultural framework of the religious system under study, as also its particularities. Chattopadhyaya's thorough analysis of the extant sources bearing on Ancient Indian religions in their proper chronological perspective shows his meticulousness as a historian of religion. Furthermore, he reconstituted a coherent picture of the religious life of the Indian people with his superbly creative and sympathetic imagination without giving up his intellectual detachment. A. Toynbee (*An Historian's Approach to Religion*, p. 132) once described the historian's craft in the following words:

The historian's point of view is the product of a conscious and deliberate endeavour to break out of the self-centredness that is innate in every living creature. The pursuit of this endeavour is common to historians of all schools, and it would be impossible to be an historian of any school if one were utterly incapable of performing this self-transcending feat of detachment and reorientation.

While writing histories of Indian religions, Chattopadhyaya considered every aspect of religion in its minutest details. For him nothing was insignificant. Every detail added to the total picture, nothing was or should be considered insignificant. As another eminent historian of religions (M. Eliade, *A History of Religious Ideas*, p. xii) puts it,

For the historian of religions, every manifestation of the sacred is important: every rite, every myth, every belief or divine figure reflects the experience of the sacred and hence implies the notions of *being*, of *meaning*, and of *truth*.



Chattopadhyaya's phenomenological approach is obvious from a careful scrutiny of the general tenor of his writings. The term, phenomenology, has strong philosophical overtones in view of an influential school of European philosophy which originated with the writings of the Czech scholar, E. Husserl. The phenomenological approach also characterizes the writings of such scholars as R. Otto, W. B. Kristensen, G. Van Der Leeuw, M. Eliade, W. C. Smith, and others. This approach suggests that the phenomenologist should try to take what appears. In an attitude of detachment and consciously setting aside, at least for the time being, one's own faith and predilection, he should try to comprehend the religious meaning and significance for the participants of the phenomenon he observes. This he will not do by enquiring its historical context, or the social and psychological process involved, but by trying to interpret its intent. Chattopadhyaya himself gives an account of such an approach in his book, *Reflection on the Tantras*, (p.v.) in the following words :

In the following pages, an attempt has been made to present a brief outline of the system from the point of view of the Tantrics themselves,

because of the scurrility heaped on the system by many supercilious writers. He wanted to judge what the intent and purpose of Tāntrik rituals were for the performers of such rituals. As W. B. Kristensen ("The Meaning of Religion") in J. D. Bettis (editor) *Phenomenology of Religion*, (p. 37) described the purpose of studying religions as

not to determine their greater or lesser religious value. Certainly, it tries to determine their religious value, but this is the value that they have had for the believers themselves.

Our next and last section will deal with Chattopadhyaya's contributions to the study of Ancient Indian society.

#### IV

Chattopadhyaya's major contribution to Indian social history came in 1965 when he published his *Social Life in Ancient India* on the basis of the Yājñavalkya-smṛti. In his foreword the author points out that a careful perusal of the Dharmaśāstra literature would have us believe that human life was never thought to be static, and the writers of these



treatises wanted to adjust human values in the light of the changed condition of the society. Parāśara remarks that the dharma in the four ages, the satya, the tretā, the dvāpara and the kaliyuga would differ from one another. Though the importance of the text is next only to Manu its date has been a moot point with the historians. Our author comes to the conclusion that it was written during the exuberant Brahmanical revival of the early Gupta age.

Traditional life in Ancient India revolved around the hierarchical social division for which two terms were used by the law-givers, varṇa (colour) and jāti (status fixed by birth). According to the former concept, people were divided into four groups, the Brāhmanas (the priestly class), the Kṣatriyas (the knightly order), the Vaiśyas (the husbandmen and traders) and the Śūdras (who served the others). This four-fold division corresponded to the similar social division of the Avesta according to which the ancient Persians were divided into the Atharvas (priest), the Rathestas (charioteers, the chief warriors), the Vastriya-Fshouyantas (agriculturalists and artisans) and the Huiti (the serfs). This hierarchy in the Avesta was not based on birth. Similarly, the Gītā informs us that the god created the four-fold division on the basis of the quality and functions of human beings in the society. However, the early Dharmaśāstra literature shows a tendency of the four-fold system to drift towards the jāti system, though the former did not completely die out.

Yājñavalkya deals with three main areas of the caste system: the formation of equal castes, the mixed castes and the method of changing caste status. He remarks that offsprings of parents belonging to the same varṇa would be regarded as having the same varṇa status or sajāti of the parents. This is substantially different from the accounts of some earlier law-givers who regarded that sons begotten of women on the next lower caste would also be regarded as having the varṇa of the father. This, according to our author, shows how Yājñavalkya was reducing the varṇa into the jāti system. He mentions six sub-castes, Mūrdhavasikta, Ambaṣṭha, Niṣāda, Māhiṣya, Ugra and Karaṇa as belonging to the *anulōma* category which arose out of irregular unions between men of the higher and women of the lower caste. The Ambaṣṭhas, Niṣādas, the Māhiṣyas and the Ugras were Austro-Asiatic tribal people who were called *sat* or good, i.e., those who accepted Brahmanism and thereby gained a status in the society. He also mentions six sub-castes, Sūta, Vaidehaka, Caṇḍāla, Māgadha, Kṣattāra and Āyogava as *pratilōma*, i.e., as belonging to sub-castes which arose



out of irregular unions between men of the lower and women of the higher castes.

A careful study of Yājñavalkya's views on the caste system, and of those of other Dharmaśāstra writers, shows that these writers had two objectives in enunciating their views: firstly, to give the tribal people a position in the orthodox society, and, secondly, to confine the various occupational groups in their area of activities. The absence of any reference to the Yavanas in the Yājñavalkya-smṛti might have been due to the fact that, at least by his time, they were given a status in the Brahmanical society. The author also significantly points out that the myth of *anulōma* and *partilōma* was enunciated with a view to assimilating the multifarious tribal, occupational and other non-Aryan groups in the Aryan society. On the change of caste status, Yājñavalkya remarks that if the issues of the mixed castes married into a higher caste, and if this continued for five or seven generations, then the fifth or the seventh generation would be regarded as belonging to a higher caste. He also states that if a member of a high caste followed the profession of a lower caste, and if this process continued for five or seven generations, then the fifth or seventh generation would be regarded as belonging to a lower caste.

Another major underpinning of Ancient Indian social life was the four stages into which a man's life was ideally divided: brahmacharya (the stage of celibacy and education), gārhasthya (the stage of a householder), vānaprastha (the stage of a forest-dweller) and yati or the stage of a recluse. It is problematic as to how far these stages were strictly followed in Ancient India. It is probable that the last two stages were not followed by the time of Yājñavalkya.

The period of education started with the dawning of the sacred thread for the twice-born, which corresponds to the wearing of kusti by the present-day Parsis. It was symbolical of the beginning of a new life, namely, that of education. Students were of two types, those who remained students all through their life, and those who became students temporarily. Our law-giver does not seem to have any objection against getting education from non-Brahmanical teachers. He prescribes an exhaustive curriculum including the Vedas, the Pūraṇas, the Nāraśamsis (the mantras in honour of Rudra), the Gāthikās, the Itihāsas (histories), the Vidyās (which probably included medicine, surgery, jyotiṣa, artha-nīti and various arts and crafts,). The education system was free, and the students used to be taught at the house of the teachers. The special emphasis was on Vedic studies. Students used to collect food



for themselves and their teachers. Their life was very austere. It started with the uttering of the *Gāyatrī* and the performance of the *Prāṇāyāma* exercises in the morning, which used to be followed by the fire ceremony in accordance with one's own *Gṛhyasūtra* rules. Their dress consisted of a staff, the skin, the sacred thread and the girdle. Cotton cloths might also have been worn by them.

For *Yājñavalkya* marriage was contractual and sacramental. He talks of eight different types of marriage. The first or the *Brāhma* type involved the giving away of the bride to the groom who was invited for the purpose. In the *Daiva* type the bride used to be given away to an officiating priest. The giving away of the bride in return for two cows was known as the *Ārṣa* form of marriage. In the *Kāya* form the bride used to be given away to the groom with the enjoinder: "may both of you perform together your duties." The *Āsura* involved the payment of money, while the *Gāndarva* type of marriage used to take place with mutual consent. The *Rākṣasa* involved forced marriages after a war, and the *Paiśāca* used to take place after deceiving a girl. Though he does not speak against any of the above eight forms of marriages, he seems to favour the first four types. He allows a Brahmin three wives from the three upper castes, a *Kṣatriya* two, a *Vaiśya* one and a *Śūdra* should marry in his caste only. A man should not marry within his *sapinda* relationship. This rule prohibits marriage between two persons because of their kinship through a near ancestor. He does not approve of cross-cousin marriage. Before his marriage, the groom should make sure that his bride-to-be did not previously belong to another man and that she is younger in age. For the proper selection of the groom, the bride's guardian should be in his natural state of mind. This is also important due to the fact that he may marry off the bride without mentioning her defects, and, later on may seek to justify his action by pleading ignorance.

The major duty of a householder is to look after his direct dependents. He should be totally devoted to his wife. If she dies he should be totally devoted to his wife. If she dies he should marry immediately afterwards. The achievement of *Dharma*, *Artha* and *Kāma* should be regarded as his main objective in life. In religion he should try to synthesize his sectarian beliefs with Vedic religion. The five great sacrificial rituals, mentioned as obligatory for a householder by *Manu*, are not regarded as binding by the lawgiver. He should feed whoever comes to his house including men versed in the sciences, the arts, of old age, a relative, a man of wealth and even a *Śūdra*, who has the



above mentioned achievements. The performance of various types of rituals is one of his duties, though the acceptance of gifts is reserved for the learned Brahmins only.

According to Yājñavalkya, the means of subsistence of a Brahmin are sacrificing for others, teaching and acceptance of gifts. The Kṣatriya should try to protect his subjects. The prescribed occupations of a Vaiśya are usury, agriculture, trade and tending cattles. To serve the twice-born is the main occupation of a Sūdra, though he may undertake trading or the arts if he cannot maintain himself and his family through traditional means. The *Anulōma* sub-castes should follow the occupations of their twice-borne ancestors, while the *Pratilōma* should follow their tribal occupations. However, our lawgiver concedes that it may not always be possible to follow the professions prescribed by tradition. He prescribes a list of professions for the Brahmins in distress but remains silent about other castes, which may show that, by his time, the occupational nexus of the caste system disappeared. Yājñavalkya ascribes important judicial, ritual and administrative functions to the Brahmins, and his account of the occupations of the professional castes, throws important light on the types of occupations followed by them.

The law-giver maintains with Manu that women are never independent and that to be a good housewife should be their main objective in life. He also adheres to the traditional Indian view of according due respect to them. Yet, in other respects, he diverges from the opinions of his predecessors. Thus, he mentions various types of recreational activities for women like games, participating in public festivities and visiting the neighbours, when the husband is at home. He supports widow-remarriage under certain circumstances. He does not refer to the custom of Sati at all. For a wicked or unchaste woman chatisement is thought to be god enough, though a husband may take another wife if she is too profligate. For adultery, he prescribes punishments lighter than those prescribed by other law-givers. Separation is justified if the husband is a criminal. Wives and daughters of a sonless deceased may inherit property, and daughters should inherit their mother's *stridhana*. The fact that the wives of the Vaiśyas and Sūdras took part in the business activities of their husbands probably showed that seclusion of women was not in vogue in those days.

The custom of Niyoga or Levirate arose in Ancient India for several reasons: the paucity of Aryan males during the Aryan invasion of India, and the custom of offering oblations to the dead ancestors by the males.



Adoption and the raising of sons by Niyoga thus became the socially acceptable means of solving the above problems. Yājñavalkya allows the raising of a Kṣetraja son by the younger brother on the wife of the deceased elder brother. This son should belong to the deceased. The permission of the gurus or the elders must be sought before the Niyoga.

The system of slavery was prevalent in Ancient India since antiquity. Yājñavalkya allows slavery in the descending order of the caste. Even the Kṣatriyas and the Vaiśyas can be slaves. A mendicant can be reduced to the status of a slave by the king for apostacy. For manumission, the law-giver lays down several conditions: he can be manumitted if he saves the master's life, or if he pays off his master all his expenses; the king can release a slave who has been reduced to that status by force or sold to slavery by thieves. They can be regarded as inheritable property. Excepting the apostates, nobody should be allowed to inherit slavery. The son of a slave woman by her Śūdra master should be allowed to inherit a part of his property, but if he does not make such a provision in his will, then his lawful sons should allot a portion to him. These informations clearly prove that during the time of Yājñavalkya the status of the slaves was better than it was in the earlier periods of Indian history.

The system of untouchability, described by Chattopadhyaya as "the greatest curse of Indian social life," was probably prevalent among the aborigines. Those who worked in the cremation grounds and carried dead bodies, and women in their monthly periods used to be looked down upon as temporary untouchables by aboriginal society. When they were given a status in the Aryan society, their custom also entered the Aryan society. In course of time, with the crystallization of the caste system, people following these professions came to assume the character of a caste and became untouchables. The Brahmins did not invent the system, though they condoned it for their benefit. Yājñavalkya adheres to the traditional view that if a Caṇḍāla touches a Brahmin he must pay a fine of one hundred paṇas, though he does not prescribe a purificatory bath for a person touching a Caṇḍāla. Chattopadhyaya significantly remarks, in this connection, that untouchability in the ancient days was dependent on birth, profession and the mental states of the persons concerned.

Yājñavalkya divides the public women into three classes: those openly entertaining people, slave women and the fallen living as concubines in the houses of their masters and the courtesans. If a member



of the first class refuses to entertain a person after accepting the required fees then she will have to give back double the amount to him. Food should not be accepted from the courtesan class. Fallen and public women should be regarded as outside the social laws.

Of the four stages in a man's life, Yājñavalkya makes the first two compulsory, because the last two stages were not widely practised: However, he remarks that if a man decides to lead a hermit's life in the third stage of his life then he should practise severe austerities. He should decrease his food intake in the bright half of the month, and increase it in the dark half, or eat on the last days of each fortnight, or he may eat once a day in the night, or once a month in the night. Yogic practices are enjoined upon those who have entered the last two stages of life. A man in the last stage should concentrate his mind on the unity of his soul with the Ultimate Soul. He should live by himself and get near a village for alms only, avoid the company of other ascetics specially, female ascetics, which measure was due probably to protect the Brahmanical society from Buddhist and Jain influence. With the growth of sectarian Hinduism, the ascetic practices of the various sects differed from one another, which was obviously due to the different emphasis on particular aspects of asceticism as enunciated by the leaders of these sectarian movements.

Chattopadhyaya's next major publication on Indian social history. *Racial Affinities of Early North Indian Tribes*, came out in 1973. It seeks to determine the origin and early history of various north Indian tribes on the basis of anthropological and literary sources. The author starts with a discussion of the Vedic materials bearing on the subject. The R̥gveda refers to the fair-skinned Nordics as ārya-varṇa and the black-skinned aborigines, ethnically designated as the Proto-Australoids and the Palaeo-Mediterraneans, as the dāsa or dasyu-varṇa. Among other epithets descriptive of the latter class, mention should be made of mṛdhravāc (of hostile speech) and śiśnadevāh (phallus-worshippers) which may refer to the proto-Australoids. The term *anās* (noseless) may refer to the proto-Mongoloids. The description of the Yadus and Turvasas as dāsas and of the Purus as mṛdhravāc is puzzling, for they were not the pre-Nordic aborigines of India. The probability seems to be that these tribes migrated from Iran to India through the Bolan Pass and that their language was different from that of the R̥gvedic Aryans. During the Vedic and immediate pre-Vedic eras, the river Ravi in the



Punjab divided the adjacent areas into two linguistic provinces, and, in all probability, the five tribes, the Yadus, the Turvaśas, the Purus, the Druhyus and the Anus originally lived to the west of the river. They lived temporarily among the Proto-Iranian Dardic-speaking people. They subsequently migrated to India and lived, contrary to the views of most historians, peacefully with the pre-Aryan Indus Valley people, during the Ṛgvedic age. In the famous battle of the Ten Kings, which was fought on the river Ravi, the above mentioned five tribes appear as the enemies of Sudās, the eponymous king of the Bharata tribe, and they were placed in the west. The Ganges-Yamuna valley was then occupied by the Proto-Australoids and the Proto-Mongoloids. According to Chattopadhyaya, the Proto-Iranian broad heads originally belonged to the Alpines, the Dinarics and the Armenoids, but they were so mixed up racially that any conclusion on craniological grounds is almost an impossibility. In course of time they established themselves in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and U. P.

The Proto-Australoids have been described as the Niṣādas in the later Vedas. They were gradually admitted in the Aryan society. The Proto-Mongoloids are known as the Kirātas in Indian literature. They entered India long before 1000 B. C. through the Assam or the Tibet region. They were described as *anās* or noseless in the Ṛgveda.

The Indo-Aryans belonged to the Nordic stock. With their colonization of the land of the dāsas and the slaughter of the male aborigines, the females became the slaves and concubines of the Nordics, which resulted in a great deal of racial mixture, which is proved by Ṛgvedic materials.

Chattopadhyaya rejects the view of Sir Mortimer Wheeler that it was the Aryan invasion of India that led to the downfall of the pre-Aryan civilization for the Battle of the Ten Kings shows that the Bharatas fought against the āryas-cum-dāsas of the west. Moreover, the latest stratum of the Ṛgveda shows that the purs (castles of the aborigines) had not yet been destroyed by the Aryans. The latest archaeological materials show that Mohanjodaro declined gradually, though it was ultimately destroyed by the floods of the river Indus, and the Athervaveda (1000 A. D.) refers to this great deluge.

The broad-headed immigrants (the Yadus, Turvaśas, etc.) found the Gangetic plain inhabited by the earlier Nordic Aryans. Hence, they skirted this area and settled down in Central India and Bihar. But the



Nordic Bharatas coalesced with the broad-headed Purus to form the Kuru tribe. The Krivis and the Turvaśas merged their identity in the Pañcālas. The Uśīnaras and the Śibis also merged, while the Vaśas and the Matsyas united later on. These mixed tribes settled in the Aryan Middle Country by the time of the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa. People living on the border regions of the Aryan country, both in the west and the east, were condemned for their non-Aryan customs. The nordics proceeded to eastern India along the route north of the Ganges river up to Sadanirā which meets the former near Patna, i. e., they expanded up to Videha. To the writers of the Śrauta Sūtras, the people of the area from Kosala to Videha appeared to be racially and culturally homogeneous.

Chattopadhyaya starts his discussion of the Dharmaśāstra materials on Ancient Indian tribal history with the location of Āryavartha which, according to the contemporary lawgivers, lay to the east of the present Hissar in the Haryana state, to the west of the wild tract near Allahabad, to the south of the Himalayas and to the north of western Vindhyan ranges. This is identical with the "Fixed Middle Country" or the "Middle Country" of the earlier authorities. The Dharmaśāstra writers also locate the Aryan Country in the same area. Surrounding this area in a semi-circle were regions inhabited by the tribes who were of mixed origin. The regions specified by Bodhāyana were Avanti (Ujjayinī and western Malwa), Aṅga (Bhagalpur and Champaran districts of Bihar), Magadha (Patna and Gaya districts of Bihar), Surāṣṭra (Kathiawad), Dakṣiṇāpatha (region lying south of the Vindhyas including the Maharastra country), Sindhu and Sauvira (the area extending from the west Punjab to Sind). The tribal people living in these areas were described as of mixed origin for various reasons: for example, the presence of the aborigines in Magadha and Aṅga, the conquest of portions of north-west India by the Achaemenids, racial admixture through inter-marriages and cross-cousin marriages. Apart from the Aryans and people of mixed origin, Bodhāyana also refers to those who were different ethnic stock in areas like the Punjab, north and east Bengal, and prescribes penances for those visiting these areas. Of the eight forms of marriage, Brāhma, Daiva, Ārṣa, Prājāpatya, Āsura, Gāndharva, Rākṣasa and Paiśāca, the first five involved the giving away of the daughters by their fathers. The fifth form might have come from the Iranians the sixth from the tribal people of the north-west, and the seventh and the eighth might have been prevalent among the tribal people of the north-west or the Proto-Australoids. To legitimize the existence of diverse people with their



peculiar customs in Aryan society, various theories were propounded by the lawgivers of the age. The hierarchical system based on varṇa and Jāti, the anuloma and pratiloma jātis and the vrātya concept are the examples of such theories. Consider, for example, the fictitious vrātya theory. According to it, various twice-born castes were described as having lost their status owing to the non-performance of sacred duties. With the help of these theories, the lawgivers gave a certain status to the innumerable foreign tribes, including the Dravidians, the Greeks, and the Scythians. With regard to the trans-Himalayan region, the attitude of the lawgivers was ambivalent. While on the one hand, it was extolled as a sacred region, the people inhabiting it were described as mlecchas, dasyus or degraded Sūdras. Later on, some of them were given the elevated status of degraded Kṣatriyas.

The Purāṇic accounts on the origin of the people of Bhāratavarṣa give us three different traditions: according to the first, the people of the country descended from the mythical king Bharata, or from the historical Bharata tribe; according to the second tradition, the five dominant races of the earth, i. e., people in general, descended from Yayāti; according to the third tradition, people descended from the mythical Manu Vaivasvata. In addition to these general theories, a few theories regarding the origin of specific peoples are also available in the Purāṇas. The Brāhmaṇas are said to have descended from eight seers, Bhṛgu, Aṅgiras, Marīci, Atri, Vasiṣṭha, Pulastya, Pulaha and Kratu. By applying the varṇa principle, some Kṣatriyas were elevated to the Brāhmanical status. The Kṣatriyas descended either directly from Manu, or from Pururavas. A third group, the Saudyumna or Kimpuruṣa (ugly persons), probably referring to the aborigines, was in occupation of Gaya, Vaṅga, Utkala and Chota Nagpur. Tho Saudyumnas were the Proto-Australoids of eastern India. It is not unlikely that they were the subjects of the Kṣatriyas of this part of the country. Of the two Kṣatriya groups, the Mānavas belonged to an earlier stock. The second group included the Yādavas, the Turvaśas, the Druhyus, the Anavas and the Purūravas. In the R̥gveda these five tribes are recorded to have taken part in a battle against the Bharata king Sudās. In the later ages, however, the above five tribes and the Nordic Bharatas merged. That's why the Bharatas are described as the descendents of Purūravas or Purus.

On the basis of the above Pūraṇic materials, the ethnographic map of north India may be drawn thus: the Ailas i.e., the mixed Nordic-broadheaded people, dominating the area extending from the Indus to



the Magadha region along the Ganges-Yamuna valley; the Mānavas, occupying the area from Kosala to Mithila: and the Saudyumna aborigines, i.e., the Proto-Mongoloids, occupying the area extending from Gaya to Cuttack, and some areas north of the Ganges.

The Purāṇic account of the Ailas moving from east to west is rejected by Chattopadhyaya on the ground that the Aryans migrated to India from the west. The Purāṇas also show that non-Aryan tribal people like the Yavanas, and the aborigines like Proto-Australoids were gradually being Indianized.

In addition to the above three chapters, the book also contains three appendices. The first appendix deals with the Aryan problem. The author points out that it is primarily a problem of language and its ethnological implications are only secondary. The general Aryan problem is different from the problem of the Indian Aryans. The latter developed features which differed from those of the other Aryans. These may be due to the fact that Indo-Iranians separated from the parent body of the Aryans at a very early stage, or that these developed in the original habitat before their exodus. The second alternative is more probable in view of the differentiation of the Aryans into the satem and centum groups over a vast area without any intercourse among themselves. If this was so, then we will have to accept the fact that the original homeland of these people must have been an extensive one extending over a vast area which made local variations or the development of special features possible. The number of the Aryans must have been vast without which the colonization of the vast Eurasian plains would not have been possible. The sciences of comparative philology, comparative religion and archaeological materials have established an Indo-European nation, but the location of their original homeland still illudes any universally accepted solution. It has been located in Central Asia by Max Muller, in Scandinavia, North Germany, Poland, Lithuania, Hungary, Eastern or Southern Russia, by some other historians, and in Asia Minor highlands by others.

In the absence of any sure methodology, Chattopadhyaya attempts a tentative solution on the basis of the Vedic and Avestic sources primarily, and the Classical and Pāli sources secondarily.

To begin with, the author refers to the three traditions from Indian literature: the first refers to the legend of the Turvaśas and the Yadus being brought to the country over the sea from a distant country; the second refers to the establishment of Kuru kingdom by a batch of



people from Uttara-Kuru; the third refers to the Ailas, the forefathers of the Aryans in India, coming from Balkh or the Bakhdi of the Avesta. Combining the Vedic with the Avestan sources, Chattopadhyaya postulates two sets of Aryan speakers in Iran, one using the letter "s" and "h" and the other pronouncing "s" as such. The sharp sibilant "s" speakers were dislodged by the "h" speakers, and the former then migrated to the Indus Valley area. The former could have been the Turvaśas and the Yadus of the Ṛgveda. The earliest reference of the Aryans in West Asia comes from the Tell-el-Amarna letters and the Boghaz-kui records whose language is more archaic, and thus earlier, than that of the Ṛgveda. On the basis of this argument, some western scholars located the original habitat of the Aryans in some part of Europe. Other arguments of these scholars may be summarized thus: firstly, the presence of a cognate word for honey in the Indo-European languages indicates that their homeland must have been in a bee-belt which can be located only in Europe; secondly, the beech tree of the early Aryan accounts grows only in the temperate zones of Europe; thirdly, the designation of the silver birch is common to some of the Indo-European languages. It grows only in Europe north of the 45 degree. Therefore, the original speakers of these languages must have originated "somewhere 45° parallel and east of the Vistula"; fourthly, the presence of only one centum language in Asia, the Tocharian of Turkistan, nullifies the conclusion that the centum speakers migrated from Asia. P. Giles, in *The Cambridge History of India*, Vol. I, adds a few other arguments to support this thesis. He points out that the Aryans were familiar with oak, beech, willow, as also with the goose, duck, eagle, horse and cow, in their original homeland. This would point to the present Austria-Hungary region as their homeland. This theory can be rejected on several grounds: the migration of the Kurus and the Ailas points towards "Innermost Asia" as their original habitat. The "Airiyana Vaejo" of the *Avesta* also points to the same direction whence they came. The author also refers to Brandenstein's semasiological research which has not found a single typically European plant among early Indo-Europeans, and the mammals include wild boar, elk, otter, wolf, etc. Archaeological arguments favouring a European home thesis are not convincing. Moreover, the earliest definite detectable Aryan materials come from Asia and not from Europe.

After the "s" speaking Aryans had migrated to India the "h" speaking Aryans drove a wedge between the earlier groups of the Aryans. As a result of this, one group of "s" speakers continued to live in the



Tigris-Euphrates valley and moved on further west while another batch of "s" speakers joined their earlier "s" speaking compatriots in India.

Thus there are serious difficulties in the way of our accepting the European home theory of some of the European scholars. The author also finds it to accept the view of R. B. Pandey, who locates it in the Madhyadeśa, and of R. Shafer, who locates it in Tibet. The author hints at the possibility of its location in the east or north-east of the Middle East countries.

The Appendix B deals with the history of the Indian tribal people in four sections: the eastern, central, western and northern divisions. The eastern division has been divided by the ancient Indian writers into three ethnic zones; the Kirātas of Assam, the Saudyumnas of Bengal and Bihar, and the Mānavas of North Bihar. The people of Assam are of Tibet-Mongoloid extraction, though they were Aryanised later on. Their language has "the Outer-band Aryan tinge", though elsewhere in north India the Kirātas speak a variety of Indo-Chinese, Sino-Tibetan and hybrid languages. Ethnically, they are a mixture of the Palae-Mongoloids, Proto-Australoids, Negritos and other tribal elements of north India. Similarly, the people of Aṅga (the Bhagalpur and Monghyr districts), Vaṅga (South East Bengal), Kalinga (Orissa), Puṇḍra (North Bengal), Suhma (West Bengal), Videha (Tirhut, and North Janakpur of Nepal) and Malla (South Nepal) have diverse ethnical and cultural elements in them.

The Central division comprises the present Uttar Pradesh with a portion of Haryana, Punjab and the Delhi region. This is the Aryan Middle Country which is surrounded by the "Outer Band" of the Aryan languages. The Middle Country has three racial types consisting of the long-headed Brahmins, Khatris, Kṣatriyas and upper class Muslims, the long-headed but flat-nosed tribal people and an intermediate-headed type. Manu's preference for the Brahmāvarta region between the rivers Sarasvathī (Sarsuti) and Dṛśadvatī (Ghaggar) as the most sacred region is well-known, while his second preference goes to the region peopled by tribes which emerged as a result of the merger of the Nordics with the broad-headed types. The Purāṇic list of people mentions only three tribal people to the east of Mathura, namely, the Kośālas, Pataccharas and Kāśīs, while in the western part lived tribes like Śālvas, Yaudheyas and Kulyas.

The Western division comprises the area from Sind east of the Indus to Gujarat and the peninsula region including a portion of Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. This area was dominated by the



Greeks, Scythians and Parthians, though they were assimilated with the Hindu society. The broad-headed types, like the Yādavas, dominated this area which was also peopled by the Proto-Australoids and Negroids. This region also had the Nāga people whose racial affinity is obscure.

The Northern division includes East and West Punjab, North West Frontier Province, Afghanistan, a part of Baluchistan, Kashmir and the adjoining areas. According to later Pūṛāṇic tradition, this area had an admixture of the long heads with the broad heads. The Scythians, Greeks, Ābhīras, Hūṇas and Tibeto-Mongoloids entered India through these areas, though they gradually merged themselves with the indigenous people of the region. There were also Kṣatriya colonies and Śūdra dynasties and tribes like the Ambaṣṭhas, Audumbaras etc.

The Appendix C includes the author's concluding reflections on India's attempt at harmonizing the diverse elements of the population into a synthetic whole. In this synthesis the institutions of caste and joint family have played a dominant role. It was through the working of the Varṇa system that many tribal people were given a status in the Hindu society. These people maintained their social institutions as before provided they did not infringe the Aryan laws. The Jāti system made the occupational castes hereditary. These two systems provided stability to the society. The process of Sanskritization, by which the so-called lower castes adopted the habits, creeds, customs and usages of the higher castes, also helped this process of synthesis. The Jāti system has also been responsible for the endogamous marriage institution of the Hindus. Various dietary laws regulated the food habits of the people. The joint family system also strengthened the bond of harmony of the Hindus. Their caste institution acted as a barrier against full Islamicization and Christianization. However, the Hindu society has been justifiably criticized for its obnoxious system of untouchability. It was probably an aboriginal institution in its origin. They entered the Hindu society with their custom of untouchability which later on became a part of the Hindu social institutions. This custom, which is comparable to the Apartheid system of South Africa, took on a horrendous form in south India. By extending the Dharmaśāstra rules, one can say that a person of unsocial disposition and irreligious character should also be regarded as an untouchable.



By way of concluding this section we will consider Chattopadhyaya's methodologies in reconstructing ancient Indian social history.

All through his writings the author shows his concern for insights gleaned from sociology. This subject has been sadly neglected by some of the universities in India, though in recent years it is gaining its rightful and honoured place in the curriculam of the higher institutions of learning. In the past, however, while Indian sociologists have erred by ignoring historical data, Indian historians have also erred by ignoring concepts and methods which were as available and useful to the historians as to the sociologist. To use these concepts and methods developed in sociology does not turn the historian into a systematizing sociologist. Looking at the findings of sociology may give the historian certain ideas as regards the types of data to collect which may be pertinent to his problem. In Chattopadhyaya's case, his study of the Indian caste system was obviously augmented by his deep study of the sociological literature on the topic. For example, his book, *Racial Affinities of Early North Indian Tribes*, bristles with references to the writings of anthropologists and sociologists like N. K. Bose, R. P. Chanda, J. H. Hutton, H. H. Risley, R. Shafer, B. S. Guha and others. These studies definitely enhanced Chattopadhyaya's power of interpretation and explanation.

The author's analysis of social causes and human motives is crisp and clear, while his social analysis of Indian history, specially his recourse to the sources unearthed by anthropologists and interpretations put forward by sociologists, has added a new dimension to ancient Indian historiography.

The author looks at political events in their socio-cultural and economic perspective. Thus, in the concluding chapter of his book, *The Sakas in India* (p. 88), he remarks: "The Sakas before they entered India were imbued with Irano-Parthian culture and in India they took up the thread of the Indo-Hellenic civilization . . . Further, the age of the Sakas was marked by a steady growth of Indian economic life in various directions." In two crisp sentences the author opens up before our mind's eye a picture of a batch of foreigners who made



India their home and contributed handsomely to the development of Indian culture in the ancient period.

History thus becomes more sociological in the hands of Chattopadhyaya, though, in that process, he has not neglected traditional historical narrations. Thereby he has shown that an historian does not have to give up his primary intellectual identity while writing history impregnated with sociological insight.

The last section will deal with the present writer's concluding reflections on Chattopadhyaya's career as an interpreter of Ancient India.

## V

For a comprehensive view of Chattopadhyaya's craft as an historian, we will have to take a perspective view of the life and time of the scholar. After all, an historian is the product of his age, and his work reflects the spirit of the times, of a nation, race, group or class. No contemporary student of Indian history believes that James Mill, Vincent Smith, R. G. Bhandarkar or K. P. Jayaswal could be duplicated today. Every student of history knows that his compatriots have been influenced in their selection and ordering of materials by their beliefs, affections, upbringing and experience.

Chattopadhyaya's development as an historian coincides with the period when India was struggling for her independence against the British Raj. He and his contemporaries were told by some western historians that Indian culture and society had been static from the Vedic Age until the arrival of the West in the country, that India's salvation lay in her conversion to Christianity, or, that "Oriental Despotism", the "Asiatic Mode of Production" and her static but "Self-sufficient Village Communities" must give way to Westernization which would lead her on the way to progress and prosperity. Despite the rejoinders by the 'Nationalist' historians, the above stereotypes continued to influence the writing of Indian history well into the Twentieth Century.



Naturally, being nurtured in such an intellectual and academic environment, Chattopadhyaya's attitude toward writing history is tinged with a degree of idealism, and it is just as well. The elaborate "Myths" about Indian history and culture and the struggle for independence supplied him with a conscious motive to idealize Ancient Indian History and Culture. In his book, *Traditional Values in Indian Life*, he emphasized the material and spiritual qualities of the Indian people, that has given the book such an enduring worth. He has laid bare the common grounds of tradition, possessed by the rich and poor alike more or less, and fortified their belief in their way of life, now so desperately challenged. And, it is well that his interpretation is liberal and humanist, stressing the genius of the Indian people for compromise, for tolerance, social justice and freedom of the spirit. Yet, he has not glossed the lapses: the brutality of the system of untouchability is not ignored, nor the inferior position of women in Hindu society.

This conscious motive for idealization of Ancient Indian History and Culture is also understandable in view of the relentless surge for change which is corroding traditional values in all parts of the world. This must have created among historians a deep nostalgia for the way of life which has been changing for the Indian people. The surge for change made the historians and intelligentsia conscious of the fact that their national attitude to life was historically based, the result of millenniums of slow growth. The writings of historians like Chattopadhyaya made the Indian intelligentsia conscious of their past. Their writings also served a timely response to the need which so many were consciously feeling—the need to rewrite Indian history free of the biases of western historians.

The balance and lucidity of Chattopadhyaya's presentation is as gratifying as his rational judgement. The vigour of his narrative has the power to enthrall and inspire. Most of what he wrote is still useful as history. His writings on foreign dynasties in India, religious sects, and his overview and generalization of Indian culture—all written from the eminence of maturity—have inspired generations of students and scholars at Visva-Bharati and elsewhere.

Despite occasional lapses in the narration of descriptive history,



Chattopadhyaya's style remains overall smooth. Take, for example, the opening lines of his *Early History of North India*, (p. XXI):

In the middle of the third century B.C., the great Seleucid empire of Western Asia betrayed signs of disintegration, and two of the easternmost provinces, Bactria and Parthia, gradually became independent states. The events thus happening outside the natural frontiers of India produced however, important repercussions on her political fortune. Hemmed on the west by the new state of Parthia and on the east by the nomads of Central Asia, Bactria naturally wanted an outlet to the bigger world for her very economic existence. She turned her attention towards the rich plains of India, and Demetrius a young and energetic ruler of the state, invaded the land and even knocked at the doors of Pataliputra, the royal metropolis of the great Asoka and his successors.

They immediately awaken interest, create a remarkable and comprehensive picture of the age described, and reveal that air of scholarly candour and that sure style which was to be maintained throughout the whole of his massive undertaking.

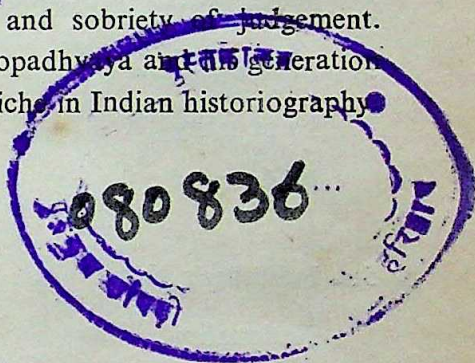
Chattopadhyaya's historical judgement is never darkened by prejudice. He was too good an historian to generalize widely and wildly and his generalizations were usually strictly based on the extant sources. The usual sobriety of his argument and the balance of his judgement should be a model for the young historians of the country.

Another aspect of his writings is his deep insight into the workings of his historical forces. Only the deepest historian knows how to display the origins and the defects of certain system of ideas. He also knows how to think or feel as men do who live in the grasp of the various systems. Such an historian studies history with an insight which pushes back the very frontiers of human thought.

Finally, Chattopadhyaya and his generation wrote history as an act of faith. At the time of the tumult of the struggle for independence



Indian historians were weary of history written for, or permeated by, the purpose of propaganda for the excellence of historical writings in the west. While not neglecting the methodologies of the western historians, they also wanted to create an environment of scholarly intellectualism in which to rewrite Indian history. Their faith was their basic conviction that something true, bereft of bias and prejudice, can be known about Indian history. The lasting influence of this type of historians is their scholarly detachment and sobriety of judgement. In writing history as an act of faith Chattopadhyaya and his generation have carved for themselves a prominent niche in Indian historiography.





## FORM IV

(See Rule 8)

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